



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

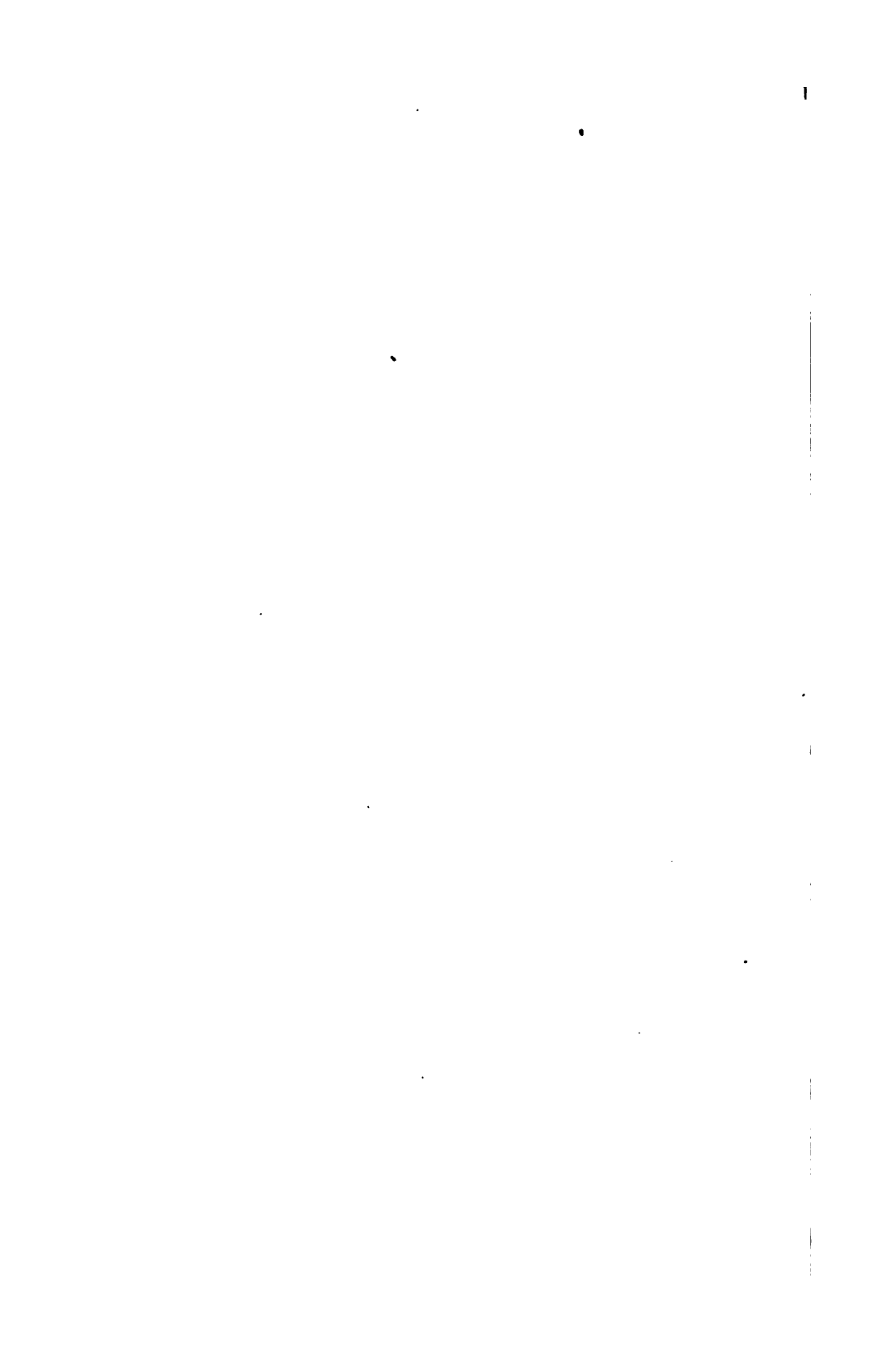




600021760M







# THE LADY HERBERT'S GENTLEWOMEN.

BY

ELIZA METEYARD,

("SILVERPEN,")

AUTHOR OF "MAINSTONE'S HOUSEKEEPER,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.  
1862.

*The right of Translation is reserved.*

250. £. 15.



LONDON:  
PRINTED BY R. HORN, GLOUCESTER STREET,  
REGENT'S PARK.

# THE LADY HERBERT'S GENTLEWOMEN.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GENTLEWOMEN'S OPINION OF THE "SOUTHWARK INN."

AFTER a due interlude of gossip, the knitting-needles go round, and Miss Hazlehurst resumes her story.

Months went by, and no sign was made on the subject of the "Dolphin's" faded glories. The great model lodging-house for young men "without encumbrances" reared its stately roof; small plots of grass were green where, hitherto, the dusty nettles and the sickly lichens had sprung up upon the rubbish heaps and died; and it was not at all improbable that, out of the two hundred and fifty compositors, printers, clerks, and better-



## 2 THE LADY HERBERT'S GENTLEWOMEN.

class journeymen who now made this admirable speculation of Alderman Rudberry's pay well, a few sometimes cast glances over the old pointed roofs of the "Dolphin," particularly as their Saturday night's supper and well-cooked Sunday dinner were supplied by the now famed Cooking School of Mrs. Dumble; and for my own part, I would not give a shilling for the bachelor who could eat sweet pudding and not think of those who made it; particularly when rumour gave out the opinion that such were young, and the majority by no means uncomely.

As other things progressed, so also did the business of the school, both as regarded an increased number of pupils and supplies of food to schools in various parts of London. This latter was now conveyed thither by contract, in light, well-horsed carts, at certain hours; and whilst the tins which kept the food hot, whether it were Irish stew, roast or boiled meat, or pudding, rested on a brazier of lighted charcoal, they were secured from theft or adulteration by detector locks, capable of being opened by none except by those who held the necessary keys. Nor was the speculation entirely a losing one, though of profit little might be said. But this was not a matter taken into account by those who had thus striven to create self-supporting Cooking Schools—it was enough if practicability had been proved—leaving to experience, and an economy not sought in this instance, the realization of per-centage on the outlay. Yet if there had been but fractional profit,

there had been no loss. For meat, by being bought in large quantities, and in the carcass, was easily and cheaply conveyed to town from distant markets, where its price was small; whilst the kindly gift of vegetables, by many of Mrs. Dumble's long known and honouring customers, brought the chief expenditure down to a low sum. Yet there *was* a profit—one of which Heaven kept, and yet will keep, if words be not mere dust and ashes—a gathering and a usurious reckoning!

Thus, as time brought progress and stability, so it did change for some of the scholars. Henriette Boncœur went to the Gregories as their household manager, Rose Clarkvoice to occasionally assist her parents, who kept a coffee-house, Grace Lawrence as servant to an elderly minor canon of St. Paul's and his maiden sister, and Julia Bunyan, as partly shopwoman, partly servant, to a decent couple keeping a small grocer's shop in the Barbican, who were just of that thrifty class to fully estimate the admirable lessons Mrs. Dumble had, in this case of Julia, so successfully given. Yet all four scholars were so often going to and fro to the "Dolphin" as to make a sort of pleasant fiction exist in good Margery's mind, to the effect that they were still with her as scholars and dear children.

Yet, as the year rolled round once more, Mrs. Dumble's health began visibly to decline. Those who saw her daily, and could judge how many were her duties, now that the Cooking School was on so large a scale, clearly perceived that

some change was necessary; for whilst she remained mistress of it, nothing but severe illness would prevent her sharing in its active duties. Accordingly, old Becky and Tummus, after many confidential conversations, came to the conclusion that "missis must quit the Dolfin;" and therefore, acting at once on a desperate resolution, Tummus, that same evening, gave his mistress full and free consent to sell all the past glories of the "Dolphin," with the exception of certain items entered on a large sheet of paper he gave to her, which, duly signed "Tummus Dolfin," included one capacious yellow post-chaise, "wherein, should his missis take to a country life, he should put in the two old posters so long out at grass, and take her a daily hair-ing."

Antiquarians, coachmen, brokers, and the general public soon, therefore, saw it announced in the newspapers that on a certain forthcoming day in June there would be sold at the "Dolphin Inn," in Southwark, a vast collection of such things as usually belong to a large posting establishment; and that many of these, from age and workmanship, would be found to be of interest to those who were collecting relics of the past days of stage-coaches.

If, however, Tummus spoke cheerfully of this sale to his mistress, Becky, and the other maids, and determined he would rub, and dust, and clean, and honour even to the last these faded glories of the ancient inn, still, when he knew no

other more curious eyes were on him than those of large-bearded Billy, or the aged owl, he gave way to an immense amount of genuine sighs ; nor did his favourite tunes, though whistled dulcetly, console to any large extent. Yet, on the appointed morning, the bright June sun shone resplendently on collar, pannel, buckle, brass-work, curb, snaffle, and bit, as all these faded glories were set forth in due order in the court-yard, all polished so brilliantly as to prove that Tummus really believed in the greatest axiom of his own peculiar philosophy, "that ven a man bids good-bye to the world he ought to do it like a gentleman ;" and he fully carried this out by adding to shiny brass his "best vaistkit." Mrs. Dumple, too, had her point of honour. For after seeing to the "ordinary at one," and to the needful dishes for elaborate private dinners, should they be needed, she took her place, for the first time for several years, in her bar, dressed in one of her nicest satin gowns and neatest caps, and looking quite the gentlewoman she really was by nature. Thus, it might be an hour past noon, and the auctioneer, refreshed by a glass of wine, was mounted on a table in the middle of the ancient yard, descanting on the rare merits of a post-chaise, about as yellow as a long-kept orange, and as round as a hogshead, when there turned in beneath the archway of the "Dolphin" a team of magnificent grey horses, drawing a large and stately carriage. The "Dolphin," in his greatest glory of paint and gilt, never saw a richer equipage. It was driven by a man past middle life,

who bore on his jaundiced face the marks of long and recent illness, though without lessening its naturally cold, haughty, supercilious expression; but though unmistakably what usage pleases to consider a gentleman—for worldly breeding, rank, and riches were marked by every sign, from his spotted neck-tie to the silver housings on his horses' harness—yet he was evidently one whom few would care to address, except such as see an idol wherever there is gilt. He threw the reins to the liveried servant at his side, and then, assisted in his feeble descent by two others from the rumble, he mingled with the crowd of brokers, coachmakers, Jews, jockeys, and gentlemen of the turf; and, after a searching glance round on what there was to sell, bid for and bought everything, just as if a few hundred pounds were nothing to a purse like his. At length, the sale closing with his eager purchase of an old Brentford snaffle, like one advertised for a year or two before, he brought it in his hand, and, entering the bar, addressed the good landlady, who, almost from the first moment of the carriage driving into the yard, had been watching him through the ambush of the tall flower-pots and spirit bottles on the window ledge. In this she had been aided by Becky, who from the first had confirmed her suspicions that he was the real author of the wrong to the unhappy girl, over whose faded letters they had so often made conjecture and wept in concert. But little dreaming of what was thus passing in the minds of the old lady and her

maid, he ordered wine and sandwiches, and then followed Letty to a private room.

"It is him, it is him!" whispered Becky to her mistress, "for Tummus has just told me that he is the great sporting character, Mr. Knaresborough, of Forest Park, Essex; and you recollect, ma'am, that we more than once made out a K, as the beginning letter of the name scratched out. And besides this, I overheard one of the grooms tell Cis that his master had never been well since he had a disappointment seven years ago."

"Disappointment!" reiterated Margery, indignantly; "was a broken heart, a dishonoured name, an early grave, nothing more than a disappointment to him? But I will see, I will see if there is nature in him, or if his sorrow be a true thing. So get the wine, Becky, and take it in, whilst I fetch the child—she shall carry in the sandwiches, and perhaps he will see what I saw in her face—a memory."

So saying, agitated Margery Duple hurried from the bar, up the wide old staircase, into a room that had once been her children's nursery, and where Nelly Chester, now the most useful and comely of all Margery's elder pupils, was seated, teaching Emma some piece of needlework. Without a word, or other preparation than thrusting back her heavy clustering hair, so like those tresses blown to and fro beneath the long-since green-leaved orchard-boughs, she led the wondering girl from the room; and when down-

stairs, and on the landing beside the parlour door, she took the plate of sandwiches from Becky's hand and bid Emma go in with them. She did so, and the door was closed. But though they listened with acutest ear, though they held their breath and never moved a step, not a sound was heard; nor did the child come back, till at last a half-stifled scream of terror nerved them to go in—and there, speechless and rigid with terror, stood the child—her wrists tightly grasped in either hand of the swooning gentleman. He had dragged forth a miniature from beneath his waistcoat, and, as it now hung suspended by its ribbon, it was the same face as the child's, only years older.

For many days the gentleman lay stricken with fever, and insensible, in the "Dolphin's" grandest bed, though tenderly and carefully nursed by Margery and her maid. Then, as he became slowly convalescent, though still for weeks confined to his room, he heard from Margery's lips how she had discharged her simple duty to his destitute child; whilst he, in turn, tried to convince her how true was his contrition and sorrow; but Margery shook her head; she truly said, "Contrition is but poor reparation for wrong such as he had done."

It was only after long entreaty on his part that she consented that his child should return home with him, and this only on the condition that, for the sake of her ancient playfellow, she might, through visits often made, watch over the rearing of his child, so that, through right teaching and a

noble sense of duty, Emma might tread for ever in the path her own unhappy mother had been lured from.

Thus, through this summer, going often in the best post-chaise, driven by Tummus, to see Emma at Forest Park, which was always a day of intense delight to all concerned, Mrs. Dumble and her favoured servants came greatly to admire a secluded homestead, amidst trees, and fields, and picturesque brooks; and as the matter was mentioned to the Alderman, and he found upon inquiry that the owner was willing to sell it, it was at once bought; and there, before the autumn's russet should tinge the forest beech trees, Mrs. Dumble prepared to settle down, and in company with Nelly, Becky, Tummus, Cicely, Mope, and Billy, see to good pails of milk, and to the rearing of homely vegetables for her "good children at the 'Dolphin.'"

Before, however, the old inn was dismantled, partly by sale and partly by the removal of Margery's best effects to Holly Farm, or Rose Clark-voice's excellent parents were inducted as master and mistress of the great Southwark Cooking School, Alderman Rudberry determined to give a grand farewell dinner beneath the four centuries' roof-tree of the "Dolphin," not only to honour Margery Dumble, its last mistress, but also to let every intimate friend he had see swan roasted and oyster sauce made, as well as be made heroes of fame by tasting both.

Accordingly, on the glorious day itself, after



such a week's previous preparation as the "Dolphin" in his best days of gilt had never seen excelled, a vast host of the Alderman's most cherished friends arrived one hour before dinner, and after a view of the Model Lodging-Houses, they adjourned to the great kitchen, and there not only saw the magnificence of swan (or rather cygnet) roasting, but heard from Mrs. Dumble's lips how Nelly Chester had prepared it.

"A two-year old cygnet," said Mrs. Dumble, as she laid her rich cambric handkerchief on the table before her, "is, when well cooked, one of the finest of rare dishes. This one, a fine specimen from Norfolk, was prepared yesterday—and this morning Nelly took two pounds of lean beef, and with it a due quantity of all-spice, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, cloves, a little salt and pepper, and a wooden spoonful of brown sugar, and having grated and chopped all very finely together, put the mixture inside the swan, and over the bird a pound of butter thickly spread. She then took half a peck of meal, and with water made it into a thick paste, and then adding a paper next the bird, rolled this paste round it, as you see. It has now been roasting two hours and a-half, gentlemen, all of which time it has been kept incessantly basted. It is now within half-an-hour of being done, so that as soon as we have repaired to the other kitchen, my Cis, in the absence of Nelly, will unroll this paste, and froth the bird with butter. It will then be served, with a paper rose on each wing, and one top and bottom of the

dish. The gravy is made of the giblets and rich beef, flavoured with onion and shalot, thickened with flour and butter, and enriched with a pint of fine red wine, and two good-sized jars of currant jelly. This, gentlemen and ladies, is the swan as you will taste it——”

The receipt, the sight, but especially the smell, made everybody's mouth water; but particularly that of a young unmarried bookseller of Pater-noster Row, who, between admiration of the fair cook, and the glory of the twirling swan, had enough to do.

After this, calling together her twelve original pupils, Emma and Henriette, Rose, Grace, and Julia included, Mrs. Duple adjourned to the lesser kitchen, and assisted by Tummus, who did not disdain to officiate on gala days of this sort, had twelve dozen oysters turned into sauce.

“Now, Thomas, open for each of my scholars a dozen oysters.” (Tummus obeyed, with a dexterity which showed that he had had large practice.) “Now, girls, take off the beards from your oysters; put—each of you—these into a little saucepan, with a small quantity of water, a blade of mace, and a shred of lemon peel. Now, having simmered sufficiently, strain through a hair-sieve, and with this liquor, and that from the oysters themselves, make a rich melted butter: thus, four ounces of butter, two table-spoonfuls of flour, a pinch of salt, two of pepper, and a dust of cayenne, adding the liquor gradually, and stirring one way. Now, is the butter thick and rich?”

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then put in your oysters; now keep your saucepans on the stove, so that the oysters plump and get hot—but *do not boil*, else all will be spoiled. Have you done so?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now pour into one tureen." And there, certainly, such a tureen-full of oyster-sauce was seen, smelt, and even tasted by the rich young bookseller, who would not wait till dinner-time, that everybody eagerly adjourned to the inn's great dining-room—where in a little while such a dinner was spread—Alderman Rudberry being in the chair, Mrs. Dimple at his right hand, and the poor gentleman at his left—as would have honoured the ancient Inn in its palmiest and its noblest days.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is now a glorious morning in May, two years and a half from the date of the memorable oyster-sauce. The sun—though the hour is yet early—falls richly through the tall, pointed windows of an old city church, so very old as to have seen many generations come and go, and lingers on the new decked pulpit and its burnished candlesticks, on the reading-desk, on the altar newly carpeted, on the cushioned pews, and shining on the flowers they are decked with, shows that the dew of morning is yet on bud and leaf. In no great while, the old wooden gallery at the far end of the church is entirely filled by female children, nicely dressed, who troop up the gallery staircase, headed by a comely matron, and two elderly wo-

men, who look as if they had been domestic servants ; after them comes the organist, and begins to play ; then people from carriages outside come in through the church-doors, richly dressed, as well as others on foot, and fill the pews ; and you can hear, by the confused din, that there is a large crowd in the street, as there is, for it has been noised abroad for the past month, by every newspaper, that, on this day of May, eleven of the twelve original scholars of the now great Southwark Cooking School are to be married, with a dowry to each from Alderman Rudberry of a satin gown, a bible, and a hundred pounds ; and from Mrs. Margery Dumble, their honoured mistress, six pairs each of Russia sheets, and a silver teapot.

All this is true ; for the young bookseller of Paternoster Row soon made up his mind, after the matter of the swan and oyster-sauce, to take a useful, a beautiful, and a not undowered wife, as the secret lines of Margery Dumble's will will one day tell ; and Henriette Boncœur is about to be the real mistress of the weaver's home ; and Grace Lawrence, having thought the choristers' master's voice a sweet one, is about to hear it perpetually, and yet not leave her old service of love and duty to the ancient clergyman and his gentle sister, but bring her husband to their quaint old home ; and Julia Bunyan has been persuaded by the thrifty grocers of the Barbican, who show their bank-book, and behave to the girl with the nobility of princes, to take their only

child, a son, and pass from shopwoman into wife; and sweet Rose Clarkvoice, whose parents make such an admirable master and mistress to the great flourishing Southwark Cooking School, has won the heart of a substantial farmer of the Weald of Kent, who owns miles of richest pastures and russet orchards; and the rest of the girls, even to small Ursula Penn, have made pudding to large purpose for the Model Lodging-House, or else why do they now step in satin like the rest?

All move two and two, the eleven in silver-hued satin, as rich as that on which a vow was made so long ago, and a twelfth as a helper in the ceremonies, and this now the acknowledged daughter of a wealthy, relenting man.

The company is headed by Alderman Rudberry and dear old Margery, the poor gentleman and Emma Knaresborough, and followed by Tummus and Becky—the former in no “Dolfin vaist-kit,” but in a bran-new suit of blue, with a nose-gay stuck in his coat as big as a small cauliflower. As the rich satin sweeps the dusty aisle, some few, of envious heart, who look thereon, whisper, as others have already done outside the church-doors, “What an absurdity to give the poorer ones a dress so rich and out of place!” but the brave, honest, manly English heart of Alderman Rudberry is like the sun, which shows no difference in its beneficence.

The ceremony is soon over, for the eleven weddings are made one business of, and not the an-

gels themselves could show a difference between the kneeling girls. After this they all adjourn to the vestry, where there is a giving and a tearful acceptance of the dowry, and an affectionate embrace from all round by Mrs. Dumble—a part of the ceremony which Alderman Rudberry very reluctantly omits, and confines himself to a blessing—not, be it observed, from any disinclination thereto, but that divers of the young husbands have a defiant look.

Amidst a great shouting from the crowd, the company set off in comfortable vehicles to Holly Farm, which they reach in time to find a grand dinner ready. After this, and a merry tea-taking, which both Mope and Billy help to enliven by their presence—for the former is in unusual spirits, and the latter proud in the greatness of satin favours—they visit Tummus's new region of "Dolfin glory," namely, an outhouse, on the thatch of which he has mounted the veritable Dolphin, and in the interior arranged his treasured relics, "chists and chaise" included. Tummus thus duly honoured, they wander into the forest close at hand, and watch the sun sink down upon the sward and early leaves.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several times during the reading of this Romance of Cookery—especially where such tangible portions as relate to gravy, swan, and Irish stew are under development—Mrs. Quince, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. McPhinn, and Miss Simpkins have interposed a word of praise, a note of

reproof, or a "pshaw" expressive of merriment or ridicule. Miss Hazlehurst's uplifted finger however, has toned down these ebullitions into silence, or else into sotto-voce grumbles. But now the dear old gentlewoman lays down the paper, and her spectacles—the little hubbub of dissent and assent—the sweet and sour combined—bursts forth.

"I'm sure I never made gravy in that way," says Mrs. Quince.

"I only think," interrupts Mrs. McPhinn, on whose tongue the reproof has been burning like a blister, "that all sic readings are carnal, and savour o' th' promptings o' th' great enemy. A destruction o' th' flesh-pots would be a' better than stirrings and strivings thereof to lost sinners sic as we."

"Fiddlesticks!" replies Sophia; "but for the flesh-pots, Janet McPhinn, where would you be? You want your breakfast and your dinner like other folks, I suppose; for the Scotch, I take it, don't live without eating, though off nothing better than sheep's-head broth and barley-cake." This is a rude speech, but Miss Sophia is accustomed to both say and do rude things; less therefore is thought of them than might otherwise be.

"Well, for my part," says Mrs. Smith, casually, though fortunately changing the subject, "the cooking part may go for me, for if people like to be fools, and put sugar in the gravy of a leg of mutton" (Mrs. Smith has never heard, amidst the shades of Shirilot, of Justus Liebig

or Alexis Soyer), "let them. The part of the story I don't like is that where that foolish Alderman Rudberry gives those girls silk gowns. Silk, indeed!—sixpenny cottons would have been good enough; for girls and servants now a-days——"

"My dears," happily interrupts Mrs. Quince, "you must all be very exhausted, so pray stop talking about gravy and girls, and have a little of my Maria's gooseberry wine, and a slice of her spice-cake."

As no one dissents, Mrs. Quince repairs to her closet to find wine-glasses, but, as with all the rest, they "are put away somewhere." So Tibb is sent off for a supply. The arrival of these, the cutting of the cake, the uncorking of and pouring out of the wine, and lastly the tasting thereof, create together a divertisement most opportune. Harmony prevails. The questions of gravy and oyster sauce are discoursed upon in a more amicable vein, though of course with just so much difference of opinion as lends piquancy thereto. The little maids make their curtsies and withdraw, to dream of Rose Clarkvoice and Nelly Chester; and when at last Lady Herbert's gentlewomen separate, the moonlight lies in silver glory on the several thresholds of their peaceful homes, the large-hearted think mercifully—though of course not thus philosophically—of her whose deficient brain and bad training have made life disastrous and uncomfortable; whilst many



18 THE LADY HERBERT'S GENTLEWOMEN.

*resolve to amend their gastronomic art, and brown, and roast, and stew on scientific principles.*

## CHAPTER II.

## A DARKENED PATH.

MORE than a month has gone by, and Mrs. Hutchinson has not heard from her son. The last time she wrote to him, she enclosed a five-pound note, for a suit of clothes he had sent word he wanted, and his reply to that was hopeful and genial. Since then she has written several times, but no answer has come, though now, on this August morning, a letter in a strange handwriting lies with others on her breakfast-table. It purports to be from George's master. It states that the young man has been alarmingly ill for some days, with an attack of summer epidemic, but is now greatly better, though still weak and prostrate. He only needs nutritious diet, tonics, and wine, to be soon quite convalescent. His mother is not to be alarmed—there is no cause for even anxiety, and he cannot be better than in his master's house. This letter makes no demand or even hint for money, but a loving mother's heart is bounteous.

Faulty as he has been, he must wait for nothing in such an hour ; so, though she can ill spare it, though she must go without a winter gown and shawl to meet it, she resolves to send " her boy " another five-pound note, and that at once.

She ponders as to the way to send it to his hand, and this privately ; for lately she has been made aware that her business is much commented upon at the Temeford post-office, and that the mistress thereof, being on friendly terms with the teacher at Shirlot, all travels hither, and is retailed again amongst the village people. This was the case with the money sent for the suit of clothes, and the matron very justly determines that this little bounty to her sick child shall at least remain unknown.

She herself cannot leave home, for she expects a person on business, and otherwise it is a busy day at the hall, for Tibb, assisted by the four elder girls, is brewing. But the faithful old servant will spare one, if her place be supplied by the girl next in age. There is also at the distance of eight miles from Shirlot, across the hills, a considerable village, where, as the matron knows, there is a money-order office, and from whence her loving gift will go privately. So she resolves to send pretty little mob-capped Rhoda, who has done for her and hers so many errands of love and truth. In the thought of her son, and the hurry of the morning's business, it does not once occur to her that any harm can come to the young girl, for it is a bright summer's day, and Rhoda, as well as the other

girls, has gone the walk before. So the little maid is called from the great brewhouse, told her mission, and bidden to dress herself in her Sunday's best whilst the money and letter are prepared. Very pleased is Rhoda, not because she will thus escape from duty—but that to do any service for the mistress she loves so well is a great joy to her. She also likes the confidence thus reposed in her, and it adds to her love of her sterling friend.

The walk, too, will be such a lovely one. Across the village ford, and for a little way beneath the shadows of the grand old trees, and over the heights of solitary hills—the sward-like velvet beneath the feet, and the views, when such come in sight, boundless and enchanting.

So with the money and letter, and a nice luncheon in the little basket swinging on her arm, the pretty maid prepares to set forth—it being now about ten o'clock on this sunny summer's morning.

“You will be careful to speak to no one by the way, Rhoda,” says the matron as the little maid lingers for the last moment on the parlour threshold, “and midway on the road stop and rest, and eat your luncheon. Afterwards, when you reach the village and have got the order, put it carefully into the letter, post this, and then go on to Mrs. Stephen's by the church, and tell her I hope to see her some day soon at Shirlot. She is a very kind old lady, and will ask you to rest, I daresay.”

Receiving these last injunctions, the happy girl sets forth. Through the great kitchen garden, thence by a barn-yard belonging to the hall, she reaches the village street. Here, a short distance past the church, and where the street, or rather road, leads downwards to the little glistening river, stands the "Shirlot Arms," a wayside public-house of mean character. Its mistress, Mrs. Price, is sunning herself on her doorstep; so seeing Rhoda go by she hails her. Now the old mistress of the "Shirlot Arms" is not held in any good repute the village through, though she keeps the sole shop and sole inn; so Rhoda, true to the matron's request, only says "good morning," and hurries on. Down the village road, past orchard and cottage garden, across the stepping-stones of the little gleaming river, and so away into the deep shadows of the trees.

Grumbling to herself, and repeating the words "charity girl," "pride," and words of a like kind, Mrs. Price retreats into her kitchen, where taking up her knitting, she again sallies forth, but this time not to linger by her door, but to make her way up the village, briskly knitting as she goes. The low wall of the Claytons' farmyard abuts upon the street; so here, affecting to be enjoying the sun, the old woman takes her stand. She has a word for everybody who passes by, an eye for everything—but especially for all which is taking place in the farmyard at her rear. A waggoner crosses it presently, and him she hails.

"Where's thy maister, Bill?"

"I' th' barn, missis."

"If he'll come this way I'd be glad of a word on 'em."

The man departs, and shortly afterwards young Clayton makes his appearance. His gait is slouching, his manner dogged and spiritless, and his whole air that of a reckless, dissipated man. Early as it yet is, he seems to have been drinking.

"Good morning, maister," is the woman's salute; "I thought that thee might just like to know that Timbs the exciseman and Dorkings the grazier 'll be at mine to-night, if thee'll like to come for a crack."

"I don't know," is the spiritless answer, "there was fuss enough up there about the last," and he jerks his thumb in the direction of the house.

"Ay, thee'd a drop too much, and the missis, ye see, would ne'er open the purse strings if she'd her will. But as you please, tho' I ha' another bit o' news I think thee 'll like to hear."

"Nay, it ain't much I care to hear now-a-days."

"Thou wilt this, maister. Thou wert speaking of it in mine, the other night, as if it were thy salvation."

In an instant the young man's whole manner is changed, as though by a necromancer's art. All eagerness, all spirit, all fire, with his head uplifted, and his hand stretched eagerly forth, he asks if she refers to Rhoda.

"Yes, I do—and saucy and proud enough she

is. She is just what all the Shirlot girls become; minxes too proud for the bread of charity they eat. Well, the wench passed by mine a bit ago, dressed in her best. She took the ford, so I suppose she has gone to Woodend, on one of the missis's secret errands,—for the matron can be sly and dry enough about many things, and 'specially when the rogue who belongs to her is i' th' case. So if thou wans't a bit of a talk w' th' lass, as thou saidst in mine the t' other night thou 'd give thy ears to have, thou canst have it, secret and sure enough, on th' hill top; for travellers be as rare there as blackberries in winter."

He doesn't stop to say "thank you," only in a hoarse whisper, "Get me a glass of brandy and water ready against I ride by," and then hurries away with a wild and reckless haste that is almost startling; whilst the old woman, having thus effected this piece of "devil's mischief," goes slowly homewards, knitting as she goes. Hardly has she compounded the young farmer's glass before he is on horseback at the door. It is strong, but he swallows it at a draught, and then muttering something about "adding it to the score," he puts spurs into his horse and is away. Scarcely an instant does it take him to ride down the descending road—to dash through the ford—to pass up the wooded lane—and then a man may be seen spurring his horse up the hill-side, as though his errand were one of life and death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Occupied with business through the morning,

and some ladies arriving in the afternoon to see the hall, to whom she has to offer the hospitality of tea, Mrs. Hutchinson does not notice, as she otherwise would, that the evening wanes, and yet Rhoda has not returned. Old Tibb, as she sits resting by the great kitchen fire, after her brewing feat of the day, has her anxiety about the girl, but this is dissipated when, as the dusk grows, she comes in with the other children from the playground.

Usually, when Rhoda has been on any little errand for her dear mistress or the old gentlewomen, she comes running in by the garden path, and so into the cloisters, with the happy, unrestrained joyousness of youth. But now, on this night, she steals in, fearing and ghostlike, through the white gates, and with steps which seem laden with a century of woe, dread, and pain.

"Rody," say the children, as they cluster round her like happy bees, "how late you are!—we've been expecting you home this good bit."

"I couldn't come sooner," is the evasive reply. Then, as if overcome by the tenderness and innocence of the loving arms wound around her, she bursts into a paroxysm of tears.

"What is the matter?" they question with affectionate solicitude. "Have you been frightened, deary? What is the matter?"

"Nothing," she answers, breathlessly. "But where is Mrs. Hutchinson?—where Miss Jones?—where Tibb?"

"Tibb is resting by the kitchen fire—Miss



Jones is where she always is, at the Claytons'—and Mrs. Hutchinson is with some ladies in her room. Such nice ladies, Rody—they've been here all the afternoon, and they came into the hall, heard our singing and lessons, and then gave Mrs. Hutchinson ten shillings to be divided amongst us. Since then they have been seeing some of the old ladies' rooms, and now Mrs. Hutchinson is making them tea. They will go soon, for we can hear the servant and old Harris getting their carriage ready."

"I will go in then," says Rhoda, who, much to her companions' surprise, takes no heed of what she has just been told.

So they run on before, and leading the way through the cloisters, enter the great kitchen, now filled with shadows save for the gleaming fire.

"Tibb," say the children, as they gather round the old woman of whom they are so fond, "Rody is very tired—she can't talk, and has been crying."

"Ay, I don't doubt, overwalking's a bad thing, 'specially to the young. The missis was secret, but I don't doubt thee'st been to Woodend and back, a good sixteen miles of hilly road. Poor child, I'll mull thee a drop of elder wine that'll recover thee."

Rhoda says faintly, "no," and sits down on the edge of one of the oaken forms in the far-away shadows of the kitchen; but, true to her tender office of comforting the children in any of their little ailments or straits, Tibb warms the wine, and gives her a small glassful. When this is drunk she bids her go to bed.

"Miss Jones will be asking after me, Tibb."

"Ne'er thee mind for once, child. I'll take the blame on me. Thou'rt desperate tired—go."

"Then please tell Mrs. Hutchinson, Tibb, that I did all she wished—and that the old lady living by the church will come and see her very soon."

So Rhoda goes her way, Selina following her with a candle. A little pressure of the hand, whilst they stood side by side in the shadows, has told Selina that her friend wants to speak to her; so she follows her to the foot of the staircase. Then for the first time Selina sees Rhoda's face, and is struck by its intense paleness.

"Rody, dear," she whispers, "what makes you look so ill?"

"Don't, please, say I look ill, 'Lena," she intreats in a low voice, and with a scared, wild expression of countenance which is startling to see, "or I may get into trouble. And please my frock is rent, and my shoes dirty, so will you let me take yours till I can put them right, for Miss Jones will be sure to look when she comes to bed."

"Yes, Rody," replies Selina tenderly, "put my frock and shoes in place of yours, and don't be troubled."

So saying, they kiss each other tenderly, and Rhoda goes.

When long after Mrs. Hutchinson comes up to bed, she enters her elder girls' room, for she has been sorry to hear that Rhoda was so tired—but all seem asleep. At least she cannot see the young girl's face, for it is hidden by her upraised arms,

so, hoping she will be better on the morrow, she lays her hand tenderly on the young girl's head, and then departs.

But Rhoda is not asleep. When the matron has closed her distant door, and all in the great house is still, she rises from her bed, and flinging herself on her knees beside it, weeps long and bitterly. The silvery moonlight, in all its wide expanse, gleams down on nothing sadder or more pitiful than this poor girl.

## CHAPTER III.

## A QUESTION.—LUCY EDEN.

AUGUST is drawing to a close, and Amy Morfe's holidays are ended. The good aunt's pen and needle have been both so industriously employed as to show result in the shape of money enough to pay her darling's journey to London, and put a pound in her pocket besides, as also in a wardrobe fit for any gentlewoman of ordinary circumstances. This last is packed in two boxes, that are the wonder of Nanny and the pride of the fond aunt.

Still there are many last touches to effect, that will keep the good little aunt employed the whole evening, for she goes with Amy as far as Teme-ford early in the morning, so the young girl has to proceed alone to say her "good-byes." Stepping into the hall, where the children are learning their morrow's lessons ere they go to their evening's play, the first one she sees is Rhoda. The girl has her book in her hand, but her gaze is

averted, and looks away in abstraction through the great open doors, as though far and far beyond lies that which must be recognised, though full of pain and sorrow. Very lovely is Rhoda—a picture of beauty in her quaint garb; but her manner, as so many notice, has become latterly so saddened and subdued. Yet the same bright, warm, and loving heart is there still, for she is the first to rise and greet Amy Morfe, and she is also the head of the deputation, who, after sundry looks and whispers aside, produce divers needlebooks and pincushions from a drawer, as little keepsakes to the young lady. These are very gratefully taken, for Amy likes to be loved; and after telling them she will be sure and remember them in turn, she bids them good-bye, and prepares to go, first inquiring if Mrs. Hutchinson is disengaged."

"She may be by this time, miss," replies Selina, "but half-an-hour ago she had a strange gentleman with her."

"Well, don't leave your lessons—I will go the private way and inquire."

Thus speaking, she quits the hall by a door at its extremity, and descending some flagged steps, goes along a passage to the matron's room at the foot of the wide staircase. Here she knocks—but no one replies. Then she opens the door gently, but the sound of voices immediately arrests her ear.

"He was, I assure you, not ill at all at his master's house. He left rather more than a

month ago, after only three months' service, and Mr. Fisher thought even that too long, so idle, insubordinate, and worthless was his general conduct."

"But I assure you," she interrupts, as though willingly deaf to the last part of the sentence, "that I had a letter from Mr. Fisher himself."

"Will you let me see it? I have been traveller for many years for the wholesale druggists he deals with, and I know his handwriting well."

Amy hears no more. It has taken her thus long to close the door, for she is fearful that her aunt's dear friend should know that her privacy has thus been unwittingly intruded on. She steals away, and going round by the cloisters, visits her several old friends. All have kindly words and some have little gifts, for Amy is a great favourite wherever she goes. Miss Hazlehurst has five shillings wrapped up in a paper "to buy something in London with," Miss Salway has worked her a collar, Mrs. Boston has knitted her some warm sleeves. And thus, with many tender words, Amy leaves her friends.

Thence she goes to the parsonage, this being only her second visit since she came to Shirlot—for her aunt has been careful that she should not intrude whilst Mr. Quatford has a visitor so dear to him as his taciturn and studious nephew. But since the day that visitor walked with her as far as the moor, they have so often met as to be no strangers to each other, though Mr. Austen

has said so little, and Amy herself has been as quiet.

When Peter has answered the porch-bell, the young girl learns that Mr. Quatford is from home.

"But you'd better walk in, miss," says Peter, "master went to Temeford this morning and cannot be very late. Though perhaps too late to come up to the hall to-night if he misses seeing you here."

So, as Amy has to ask for some letter to take to London with her, she goes in.

When she enters the library the first thing she sees is Islip. With his cigar and his book he sits outstretched in one of the old bay-windows, and for some minutes he still sits on, neither speaking nor appearing to notice her. Then rising, he fetches a very large thin book from off some shelves, and spreads it forth on the table. When he has found a certain place in it he beckons with his hand, and for the first time breaks silence.

"Come here: I want to learn something about your proficiency in geography."

She obeys him timidly, for she is in awe of his knowledge and his strange, abrupt manner.

"Now look—here is a map of the world. Here is England—here is India. Is the distance between the two great or little?"

"Great: if one went wholly by sea the voyage would take three months."

"Quite right, Amy—the voyage is very long

and very tedious. Now, is the climate hot or cold?"

"Very hot, except amidst the mountain ranges."

"Right again, little geographer. Now tell me, would you like going such a voyage?"

"I really don't know, sir—I never thought about it. Yet people, I should think, must have some inducement to go so far, and to a climate so unlike their own."

"True, motive goes prior to all steps of the kind. Now, couldn't Amy fancy some motive that might lure her so far?"

The young girl looks quickly up into his face, but does not answer.

"Silent, pussy? Well, I'll put it thus: If your aunt went, say, would you follow?"

"But, please, Mr. Austen," she answers, innocently, "aunt will never go such a voyage; she will never leave Shirilot, because, as she says, old as she is, she can never hope to win independence a second time."

"Poor lady! she deserves it, if ever woman did. But I want an answer to my question, little gold hair. Aunt not going to India, is there no one else who might lead the way, and *you* would follow?"

She begins to comprehend him now—she begins to see what his purpose has been all through; but she cannot answer him, her innocent shame and wonder are so great.

"Well, well," he says kindly, as he lays his



hand for the first time in his life amidst the beautiful tresses he loves so tenderly, "we'll say no more just now—only one thing."

She looks up into his face, still burning with innocent shame ; but her answer is a silent one.

"You never told Miss Morfe, eh ! about our first walk to the moor ?"

"I did, sir, but perhaps she didn't hear me. I tell dear aunt all things—I have no secrets from her."

"Quite right. But as the history of the first walk died in silence, let also the lesson in geography. I'll tell her myself one day."

"Very well, sir ;" and Amy, loving the innocent secret, closes it in her heart for many a day.

He is silent for a few minutes, and then he asks when she goes. She answers at six o'clock the following morning.

"And don't come again at Christmas ?"

"Most likely not, for the journey is expensive, and the weather then very cold. But aunt says, if she can earn enough by some new story, she will be sure and send for me, though I must not count too much upon coming, lest I be disappointed."

"Well, we'll see—" is the abrupt answer ; "I go myself in February—we'll see."

With this he bids her take up a book and amuse herself ; and then resuming his seat in the distant bay, says no more till the civil "good-bye" of a stranger.

Mr. Quatford arrives soon after. He has brought Amy a present of books from Temeford ;

and when he has written the letter she needs, and promised to cheer her good aunt with both visit and newspaper now and then, she goes.

The morrow night she is safe once more at school.

As peacefully as ever, the weeks at Shirlot pass by. Mrs. Hutchinson has been ill, and every one notices her great depression, and they also notice in her manner and countenance, a something new in both; a determination, as it were, to be cold and stern and hard, and never be pitiful again, no, nevermore. Rhoda is also silent and subdued, but the matron is absorbed too much in her own great griefs to notice as hitherto one she loves so well. But Tibb guesses that something is the matter, and ponders thereon; whilst her school-fellows, those who see more of Rhoda than the rest, wonder at the tears which so often and so bitterly fall.

Russet September is here, and in its middle, when, late on the evening of a cold and rainy day, those who are latest up hear a vehicle pass the lodge, and, driving up the avenue, stay before the iron gates which enclose the inner lawn. Lights gleam through the left cloister, old Harris goes to and fro, there shines bright firelight through Mrs. Eden's door, therein passes the elder gentlewoman and a much younger lady; the door is closed, the vehicle departs, the gardener relocks the gates, and all is still. In the morning it is well known through Shirlot that Mrs. Eden's daughter has arrived, and public curiosity is raised to

the utmost to know what sort of a person she is.

Days pass, and little is seen of her, for she is quiet and retired. Mrs. Eden visits with but few, for she is not loved, and looking upon herself as one of the aristocracy of Salina, keeps aloof from all but a select number. But the women who wait upon the old lady, as also Mrs. Hutchinson, soon report very favorably. "She's no more like her mother than chalk's like cheese," says the former—"Miss Eden is so unlike her mother," says the latter, "that except for a partial likeness of features, you would not know them for mother and daughter." The lady herself is seen but little; she is studious and occupied, and each afternoon she sets out on long and solitary walks. The evening's fireside, it is said, is very bright, and Mrs. Eden, who seems wrapt up in her new guest, appears unusually happy.

Then presently it is observed that the unused room next Mrs. Eden's has a fire lighted in it each morning; the elder girls, Selina, Rhoda, and others, are seen going to and fro on little errands thereto; and soon it is whispered that there the lady writes. This is news of a choice kind for Miss Simpkins; it enables her to scandalize after her own bitter fashion, and to talk largely of favoritism, extravagance, and so forth. "Who finds coals?" she asks, and "Who is the somebody that this fuss is made about?" She asks these questions; but her own heart mostly answers them. As she can hear so little, she peeps, she reconnoiters through the win-

dow of the solitary room, which, being situated in an angle of the building, and much concealed by shrubs, is favourable to this system of espionage. She rushes in great haste past the door, whilst Rhoda, or Selina, or Julia is entering on some little mission ; but all she sees is a young woman very studiously employed. A small three-legged table is covered with books and papers, a good fire burns cheerily, for the place is damp ; whilst the other decorations of the room consist of two chairs, an old sofa, an old box, some bundles of old newspapers, a broken weather-house above the fire-place, an iron rod for a poker. These are the luxuries Miss Simpkins, like Tom of Coventry, peeps to behold.

Two of Lady Herbert's gentlewomen desire in an especial manner to make Miss Eden's acquaintance. The one is Miss Morfe, the other Miss Penelope Pockle. The wish of the one springs out of the simple fact that it would be a pleasure to her to know one so gifted and noble-hearted as Miss Eden is reported to be ; the other from the more complex desire that a niece occasionally visits her, who is independent, fashionable, wears fine bonnets, and likes to patronise others by ceremonious calls at hours strictly correct to polite usage.

Now it happens that Miss Matilda Blandusina Pockle comes on a visit to her aunt a day or two before that of Lucy's arrival, and discussing the news of Shirlot, the authoress's denouement is mentioned.

"I would call upon her, Matilda," advises the polite and affected Penelope; "for though I don't like the mamma, the daughter may be an amusing companion. The family connexions are highly respectable, and Miss Eden, I believe, moves in excellent society in London. Of course she cannot be considered on a footing with *you*, who, with your hundred per annum, are an independent gentlewoman; but of course, my dear, in a place like this, one must choose the best out of such society as there is. Ah me! I regret those happy days when I had neither to wet hand nor soil foot; for, to speak the truth, Shirlot is a very mean and plebeian place, everybody is very vulgar, and the income miserable." Thus contemning, even while she eats it, the noble bread bestowed, and the noble shelter that spared her from the walls of the parish union, seeing she has been through life one of those who would not work, this specimen of *some* of Lady Herbert's gentlewomen discourses with her niece, and winds up her conversation by saying,

"Yes! I would call to-morrow, and astonish her with my velvet cloak and new bonnet."

Accordingly, on this eventful day at noon, a little bird-like tap comes on the quaint old door, and the tapper being bidden to enter, little dove-eyed Selina steals in, makes her curtsy, looks with great reverence at the lady, and lays down a card, on which is inscribed "Miss Matilda Blandusina Pockle."

"If you please, ma'am, the lady is Miss

Pockle's niece, and she will call in half-an-hour."

"Very well, Selina;" and Miss Eden looks up kindly at her little favourite, for Selina carries round the letters each morning to the several rooms, and thus Lucy sees the pretty little one nearly every day.

At the time appointed, Miss Matilda is announced, and a tall, raw-boned, would-be young lady, dressed in the extremity of provincial fashion, enters, bows stiffly, and takes her seat. Simple, gray-walled, hill imbosomed, peaceful Shirlot never saw so smart a vision before. The simple attired Londoner of studious life is as a primrose to a full-blown peony or sunflower.

"Aunt wished me to call upon you," says Miss Matilda, "for she thinks your society may be agreeable to me, in this stupid, dull, vulgar place."

Lucy, who has had to lay down her pen in the midst of a sentence of grave import, bows at the compliment Miss Pockle implies, and adds,

"I differ with you in opinion, I fear, Miss Pockle. Shirlot is to me a most charming, venerable place. Hallowed by the bounty which consecrates its walls and hearths, it should be, I think, a place of especial interest to those whose relatives and friends are hourly benefited by the blessed bounty of Lady Catherine Herbert."

Miss Matilda Blandusina has so little of the sublime in her nature, as to comprehend but poorly any allusion thereto, but she replies by tartly saying that her aunt wouldn't be at Shirlot if she could help it, and that she lets as few as

possible of her respectable friends know where she really is. "As to me," concludes Miss Matilda, "I wouldn't let my Bath or Cheltenham friends know for the world that I visit at such a place. I always say I am away at some distant hall."

"I see no shame in eating the bread of Shirilot," answers Lucy, with a show of spirit, "by those for whom it was intended—the old and poor."

"Oh! aunt is neither very old nor very poor, only she, &c., &c."

Miss Matilda enters into a long explanation of her aunt's affairs, not worthy of recapitulation, except as to the point elicited of misfortunes sprung from idleness and thriftless waste. Lucy makes no reply, so Miss Pockle enters upon the dull young ladies' topic, "the weather."

"Do you stop all the winter?" asks Miss Blandusina, when this subject is exhausted.

"Probably so."

"And I must probably wear out two months here, till my friends, the De Lormes, are settled in Cheltenham for the winter. It will be dreary enough, I fear, without harp, piano, or congenial friends. But I think I shall study. Perhaps—perhaps, you have some works you can lend me?"

"All mine, I fear, Miss Pockle, are on subjects which would fail to amuse."

"Perhaps not. Have you—have you—I forget his name, but he wrote a great many plays, in, let me see, the reign of—of—King Alfred, I think?"

"That is far too early a date, I fancy, Miss Pockle. Perhaps you mean Shakespeare. He

wrote almost all his plays in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and died in the reign of James the First."

"Ay, I mean *Mr.* Shakespeare. Now if you will lend me his works I will really study them; only pray spare them for full two months—quite two months. I'll study them so that the De Lormes shall be surprised."

"You can have the books—if I want a volume I can send for it."

"Yes, only don't hurry me."

"Certainly not," smiles Lucy. Then she adds good-naturedly—"My mother has some of Walter Scott's novels, if they would amuse you."

"Not at all. I can't understand the Scotch dialect—and besides, it is so vulgar."

Lucy does not dispute Miss Pockle's proposition. There are people whose opinions it would be about as absurd to meddle with as to reason with a lunatic. When we have those to deal with who are mentally children, we must treat them as such, and not otherwise.

A pause in the conversation permits Miss Matilda to look round the poor room, yet sacred and pleasant to her whose happiest hours are passed therein.

"This is a poor place, Miss Eden. I cannot think how you like to pass your days here—you must be so dull."

"On the contrary, Miss Pockle, I am never so happy as when here, and busy with my books."

"Ah, well, writing is, I suppose, a very easy



and amusing sort of thing, and to be done by anybody whose necessities compel them to have an occupation. I am independent, and therefore I suppose I shall never be very studious—ha, ha! But I fear I trespass. Good morning.”

Saying thus, rising, and just holding out the tips of her accurately gloved hand to the authoress, Miss Blandusina departs.

After another visit of state, Miss Pockle reaches home, where her aunt, in very negligée costume, is cooking dinner, in the true fashion of the idle and ignorant; and cross withal that she has to officiate, instead of being able to ring her bell and order cook, butler, and housemaid.

“Well, aunt,” says Miss Matilda, as sitting down on the sofa she proceeds to pull off her *recherché* gloves, “*my* elegance of attire and manner has been quite thrown away. That Miss Eden is the plainest, oddest, little body I ever saw—no conversation, no manners, no style. Her dress is as plain as a Quaker’s, and she seems as contented in that dirty old cell as in a palace. Well, I shall waste Cheltenham style on her no more.”

“No,” grumbles the aunt, as she turns the piece of blackened steak on the gridiron, “nobody would show anything in this place, buried amidst hills, and with nothing to look at but old women and charity children.”

“Only think, aunt, of the ill-bred creature calling her ‘ma’ ‘mother.’ But I’ve borrowed some books of her which the woman shall fetch just now. I shall keep them a long time for the pur-

pose of study, and astonish the dear De Lormes—I didn't say their real name was Dobbin, and they were grocers—when I get invited next time to Cheltenham."

"Well, my dear, anything, so the time is not so weary to you. Now make haste, dinner is just ready—though I shan't lay any cloth to-day, I'm too tired."

The afternoon proves to be a very wet one, so Lucy, returning to her quaint study, brightens up her fire and sits down to write letters. She has left her mother asleep in her easy-chair, the fire bright, the room exquisitely neat, the whole a sweet old-fashioned picture of peace and gracefulness.

The letters are just finished when there comes a tap on the door, a hand lifts the latch, a kind voice speaks, and little Miss Morfe, with her bright face half hooded in a shawl, and her trumpet in her hand, enters.

"Excuse me," she says, as she makes her pleasant greeting, "but my maid, who saw the matter by accident, told me you had had a visitor this noon; so, as this was the case, I thought I would make bold and come and see you—that is to say, if I do not disturb you."

"Not at all. I have been desirous of making your acquaintance, Miss Morfe, and nothing but my natural timidity has hitherto prevented me. Come, sit down—you and I, dear lady, as women who have known the trials and toils of this life, will be, and ought to be, friends."

In this way Amy Morfe and Lucy Eden begin their life-long friendship. They are at once at home with each other—at once friends—minutes are to them years in clearing off the small hindrances to love and knowledge. Together they sit hand in hand—together they look into each other's honest hearts.

They talk about a thousand things—books, literature, art, Shirlot—till the belfry clock, striking five, warns Lucy that her mother will wait tea.

“Well, step over and see me to-morrow evening if you can,” says the deaf lady, “mine is the cloister where we gain the sinking sun. Come and pace up and down with me there, and feel, as I do, that the monks were right in fashioning such places for meditative thought.”

“I will,” is the reply; “to me these cloisters of Shirlot are the most exquisite feature of the fine old place. And if——”

“And if,” interrupts the deaf gentlewoman, “you would so far honour me as to read something you have written—something say of art, of which I hear you write so nobly and so well, I shall be obliged and deeply honoured.”

“If you please,” answers Lucy, timidly, “if I have anything appropriate here, for my papers, Miss Morfe, are almost all locked up in London. Another day—say by the winter—I, in turn, will ask the same question.”

Presently they part, and Lucy returning home has tea, and after despatching Shakespeare to

Miss Pockle, spends as pleasant an evening as acrimonious grumblings permit, for the shadows of the great insanity begin to cover the light already.

At nine o'clock, just as morbid irritation takes a fresh direction, and is clamorous about going to bed, there is a knock at the door, and Lucy opening it has a parcel and a note put into her hand by the servant of the aged lady next door.

"Why, the books are returned already!" she exclaims, as she puts the parcel on the table, "and with a note from Miss Matilda."

When open the missive reads as follows—the writing being in the most approved angular hand :—

"Miss Matilda Blandusina Pockle presents comp<sup>ts</sup> to Miss Eden, and returns *Mr.* Shakespeare. She is surprised Miss E. could have lent her such books, for *Mr.* Shakespeare is a most improper man."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CLOISTER WALK.

SLOWLY up and down the ladies begin their evening walk. No doors are open except that of Miss Morfe's room, with its books, its open casements, its lettered air; but presently other doors open, other of Lady Herbert's gentlewomen step forth into the golden light, so that by the time the younger gentlewoman at Miss Morfe's request modestly opens the paper in her hand, step after step softly paces, gown after gown gently rustles, till some dozen ladies, like Peripatetic philosophers in the classic groves, walk up and down, listeners though not talkers. Thus the lady begins to read her story of artistic grace, her story of

### THE BUTTERCUP SPOON.

When the little, cheerful, trimly-clad gentlewoman had descended the wide old-fashioned stair-

case, she turned to the right into a large stone-flagged kitchen.

Two women-servants—the one old, the other young—were seated at needle-work within the circle of a large bow-window that looked out pleasantly into a little court gladdened by the evening sun. It was a little four-cornered court, with tall, dusky houses on two sides of it, and a high wall on the two others; yet some ivy, that throve apace, and plants in pots, and mignonette in long trim boxes, gave it an air of stillness, freshness, and good neighbourhood very pleasant to behold.

“Prissy,” said the trimly-clad gentlewoman, as she forbid her old servant to rise by a kindly motion of her hand, “your master and I are going a little drive to Hampstead—poor Frisker hasn’t been out of the stable these two days, and Trim and Ben have been begging a walk of me all the afternoon. But we shall be back by half-past nine, and we’ll have supper by then, Prissy, if you please—the veal-pie and a salad” (and here the elderly gentlewoman dropped her voice a tone or so), “and any other little thing that you think may tempt; for our dear Grinling made no dinner yesterday or to-day.”

“No, ma’am, and won’t,” replied Prissy, quickly, “if he goes on as he has been going for several weeks. He was at work at five this morning, and is at work still; and though this grand Exhibition, that is to be, will be a good thing for everybody, I daresay, it won’t for us, dear missis, if it lay young master on a sick bed. Oh, no! that will be

very sad indeed—for me I know it will, who nursed and loved him as a babe.”

“You say truly, Prissy,” said the trim elderly gentlewoman, with a sigh; “but dear Grinling has been long at man’s estate, and it does not do for me or his father, even in love, to interfere with his noble will. For very noble it is—and God has more than blessed us by the gift of such a son. But,” she added (a moment after, and more cheerfully), “he will perhaps come with us, I will send his father to ask him; or, if not, he must at least rest after supper; and to-morrow, thank God, he will have a long rest—it is the Sabbath.” So saying, little Mrs. Gibbons just lifted up her dress again, so it might not sweep the kitchen floor, and retraced her steps, staying by the door, however, to tell Prissy, in a low voice, that Rogers the apprentice must be bidden to come at two on the morrow for a savoury dinner for his ailing mother.

Once more in the wainscoted hall, trim little Mrs. Gibbons looked round for her husband; but though she could not see him she could hear him, for the old gentleman was “soh-sohing” Frisker at a vast rate—it being quite evident that that renowned pony of Hatton Garden possessed at the instant an amount of mettle that would, had he been put to it, have led to his performance of most astounding things. Nor could the little gentlewoman help smiling at Frisker’s “naughtiness,” as she called it, when she reached the upper door-step of the three that led down to the dusky pavement of Hatton Garden, and there saw not

only her short portly husband in the act of restraining Frisker's mettle, but likewise two merry-faced apprentices, who, but for the presence of their portly master, would have incited rather than suppressed the Frisker "naughtiness." As it was, their manner was very suspicious; and doubtless Frisker knew that he had allies at hand, for his naughtiness increasing, an old porter came and hung on at the back of the gig, or Frisker, could he have cleared the streets, might have taken a short run of twenty or thirty miles or so, and then only stopped for want of breath.

"My dear David," said little Mrs. Gibbons, smiling, as I have said, in her nice quaint way at the Frisker naughtiness, "will you just see if our dear Grinling can come with us? He half-promised at tea-time he would."

"No, no, my dear," was the half-cross reply; "you must go! And pray make haste, for this pony is incorrigible. I declare I will sell him next week, and that to a costermonger; for if he go on thus, and we are only able to take him out once a week or so through this busy time, he will be wild or mad by next spring. No, I'll have no further sentiment—I'll sell the fellow next week, and that to a brickmaker or a——"

"Nonsense, my dear," smiled his kind little wife; "you know you couldn't part with Frisker."

"But I can and will, Mrs. Gibbons!"

"Hush, David, hush! If our good old pony is a degree unmanageable this evening, it is more your own fault than his. For you know you are



always taking him nice pieces of bread into the stable, and every evening a little basket of corn over and above his allowance. So don't scold him, he'll be all right by the time he reaches Hampstead Heath."

Then raising her voice a little, Mrs. Gibbons called to Frisker, and bid him be good, with a tender epithet or two, that proved of marvellous result. For the pony, jerking up his head, turned it round, gave a neigh of delight and recognition that must have astonished everybody in the neighbourhood; and putting aside his "naughtiness" as a thing quite alien to him on ordinary occasions, relapsed into his wonted state of patient tameness and docility. The porter retreated to the pavement; the apprentices settled their "missis's things," namely, a wadded cloak and a footstool, in the gig, and the irascible old gentleman, as though to atone for his threat about the costermonger, coaxed Frisker over the ears, and let the pretty creature rest its nose upon the cuff of his coat—though it was his best one.

Followed by Ben and Trim, who, to say the truth, had by divers barks and sly nibbles vastly aided and abetted the Frisker rebellion, Mrs. Gibbons retraced her steps along the wide hall into a parlour; large, lofty, and looking into the still, ivy-garnished court already mentioned. From this the sun came in broadly, and golden, and full of gladness, as though it were the glory of some benignant, loving angel's wing, whose feathery points, more full of glory than the rest, shot, as

they moved, bright rays of amber light wherever lay a shadow in the room. Though exquisitely decked and neat, and well and even luxuriously furnished, this fine old room had no commonplace or formal air about it ; but in the profusion of fresh and rare flowers, in the carved antique furniture, in the pictures, the books, the china, there was the evidence of much substance and cultivated taste. It was more like a room in some old country grange than one in the heart of dusky London.

Taking a small bunch of keys from her pocket, little Mrs. Gibbons unlocked a quaint, carved cupboard in a recess, poured a few spoonfuls of a rare cordial into a taper Venetian glass of most exquisite form, put this, with a biscuit, upon a little antique china salver, and then went from the parlour again into the hall, staying, as she did so, by a cushioned chair, to rouse a very huge black cat that lay there curled up asleep. The minute it heard its name of "Sweep," and saw the glass and salver in her hand, it leapt to the ground and ran on before with a docility which rivalled that of Trim and Ben.

At the far end of the hall was a great oaken door, made stronger by vast clenchings of iron. This, after the old lady had rung a bell, being opened from the inner side, she and the household pets were admitted into a series of immense work-rooms, that led one from the other in a continuous line. They had evidently, from the amount of carving, traces of stone groining round windows

partially bricked up, and from the floors of massive oak, once formed portions of some old palatial mansion, perhaps that of the bishops of Ely, and afterwards of Queen Elizabeth's handsome chancellor. Though their day of state was thus gone by, their present use could hardly be called an ignoble one; for as they opened one into the other there might be seen almost the entire process of silver work, from the rough ore yet unassayed to it as it stood in the burnished candelabrum and the costly salver. At the end of the fifth room, where the finished plate stood ranged on baize-covered tables, the little lady opened a small door, partly glass, and shaded by a green curtain, and entered one of the prettiest little offices or studies you can imagine. It was solely occupied by a young man, who, seated drawing at a table placed in the recess of a small bay window, did not seemingly see or hear his visitor, till Sweep, jumping up on the table, began to pur round his shoulder. Then he looked, and then at once you saw it was the trim little gentlewoman's son, by the extreme likeness between them.

"Won't you go with us, my dear Grinling?" she asked—for such was her son's name, given to him in honour of the great English wood-carver—"we are going a drive across Hampstead Heath, and so home to supper. The air would do you good." And as she spoke she laid her hand tenderly upon his shoulder—the one near which Sweep was purring such a pretty song!

"Not to-night, I think," he answered gently,

for his speech always betokened the reverence in which he held this good soul; "I want to finish before dark this shading of the design, so as to judge of the effect. As, should it be good, Wilcox can begin the model on Monday. For if I do not thus make progress, our house will scarcely hold its old fame in the Great Exhibition of next May."

"But there is full ten months yet, Grinling," said his mother with a smile.

"Yes," was the reply, "there would be time enough if good designs were procurable, but they are not; and from what has occurred to-day, I fear we shall not only have to depend upon my own pencil for the designs of the more important and costly articles, but also for those for forks and spoons—for the originality and beauty of which our house has half a century's fame. To fail in this department would be almost worse than in articles of greater cost and pretension."

"It would," was the reply; "but I thought you had sent round to several of the best designers? Have they sent no designs in?"

"Plenty. Three young men were here this afternoon, with some twenty or thirty designs between them for forks and spoons; but with one exception all were totally without originality. As far as correctness of drawing went, these designs were true enough; but there was such an utter absence of taste, something so plebeian and commonplace in the result as a whole, that I could but refer the singular deficiency to the utter ab-

sence of all education but that connected with mere lines and geometrical principles. There had been no leaving the common boundaries of art for art's great sake."

"My dear Grinling," said the intelligent little gentlewoman, laying her hand upon her son's shoulder—Sweep comprehended it in his tender coaxings, and sang to it some of the softest notes of his pretty purring song—"because you, whilst reading the Italian poets, or a Greek historian, or the French Bossuet, or one of the grand new books of our grand age, stop often and say, 'Oh! let me recollect *this*, for it is a piece for art,' all men cannot do this, nor would, even if they had had your education, for this perception is given but to few. Besides, the education of artists has been generally such a neglected one, whilst you, my dearest Grinling, had all the advantages that mine and your father's love could give. For when you left Merchant Tailors' School, you might have gone on to Oxford, and been sure of the highest honours there; but you preferred going to Italy, and cultivating its language and its art. Besides," she added, "you had always an unconquerable love for the pencil from a little child. Think how young you were when you loved *those*." She pointed as she spoke to some of Flaxman's exquisite designs for the Iliad and Odyssey, which in pretty, though old-fashioned, frames were hung up and down the walls of the little studio.

"Yes," he said with a smile, "my love for

those began very young. I think, too, that the stories you used to tell me on winter evenings about Flaxman sitting in his little chair behind his father's counter, reading Pope's Homer, first made me think that the essence of art is drawn from far wider bounds than the lines we put on paper. And even to-day my boyish love for those prints has been my best inspiration. See!"

As he spoke the good son raised up the fine design upon which he was at work, so that his mother might see it. It was for a sort of tripod of wrought silver, for use as a centre-piece in holding fruits and flowers; the branches to hold, amidst exquisite filigreed work, rich porcelain cups of the deepest blue, whose hue would gleam through the airy interstices. Nature and cultivation had together made the artist fruitful of a genuine work, for nothing could exceed its simple yet original beauty.

In the meanwhile the good mother had put on her spectacles, and stood looking at the work. Now she raised her head, and regarding her son with tender and reverent pride, looked from his thoughtful face once more upon those master-pieces which Homer had spiritually created, and to which Flaxman had given form.

"My dear Grinling," she said in her own gentle way, "as your father told me yesterday, your design is very beautiful, and much will come of it, I think. Nor is my idea merely fancy; I am sure that you owe the best part of your peculiar taste to those pure and graceful outlines from Flax-

man's pencil. Six months before you were born, your father and I saw them one evening in a shop window. We stopped to look, and my admiration was earnest and genuine; for though I knew nothing of art as an artist, I had a taste that way. All evening I talked to your father of those outlines; and when I returned from my walk the next afternoon to tea, I was astonished to find them hung round our dear old parlour, in the same frames they rest in now. My surprise was as great as my joy. Week by week, till you were born, I sat amidst them at my needle-work, often looking up, often staying to rest whole minutes with my gaze fixed on them, and wishing that my child might, as it grew up, see as much grace and purity as I saw in those lovely outlines, and have besides a taste for art; not so much because of this old Hatton Garden business, as for the idea which I had formed in regard to myself, though in me it was uncultivated, that any taste which raises us above the constant consideration of the mere common-places of daily life makes us better, makes us holier, lifts us as it were to God. My wishes were fruitful; you were born with a love and a sense of the beautiful. As you grew, and I carried you up and down our parlour, you gazed, and in time pointed your tiny fingers at the dear pictures; and this taste went on growing till you took a pencil in your hand, and gave us signs, though they were childish ones, of our duty, and through it of such excellence as seems here. My Grinling, my dear and thoughtful son,

may I live long to bless heaven for what thou art both to me and to your father."

"Dear mother," said the tender son, "there are debts in this life we cannot and we should not attempt to pay. Such are mine to you."

He laid his head on the tender arm, where it had rested so many countless times in peace and infant love, and took her dear maternal hands within his own. On these the sinking sun shed the sweet blessing of its light; and to them pretty little old black Sweep purred out anew his song!

"My dear Grinling," said the good mother, "you must not be distressed about this business of the designs for forks and spoons. There is ample time and genius enough in London, you may be sure; and if I am a good prophetess, as you say I am, we shall find it, or it will come to us, be certain. Remember the old Scripture proverb against useless and carking care, and proceed with your own fine work in peace. Indeed, I think we shall find what is needed, and this without difficulty, if we seek it at female hands. For a taste for art in woman is not now suffered to die out without cultivation, as it was in my young time. Your father has read so much to me lately out of the newspapers about the extraordinary development of taste in the Female School of Design, that if proper means are taken, I think what is needful will be easily found in this direction."

Her son smiled and looked up into her face. "You are always thinking of a daughter, mother,



and those treasures you say you are saving for her in your deep old-fashioned drawers—ancient lace, and wonderful linen, and things of that sort ! ”

“ Well, well, my Grinling, I hope to have one some day, and to love her too. Now just let me see you take a few drops of this wine-cordial—for you know you have scarcely tasted food to-day—and let me go, or your father will be as impatient as Frisker has been.”

She waited till he had sipped the restoring cordial and eaten a fragment of the biscuit ; then, when she had pressed her lips down once more upon his thoughtful face, she went her way as she had come, and left him to his earnest work, to the lingering beauty of the setting sun, and to the deep old-fashioned pur of dear old Sweep, tucked up in pincushion-stateliness an inch beyond his pencil.

In five minutes more the good couple were on their way from Hatton Garden, the old gentleman's irritability much softened, now his wife was by his side, and Frisker proceeding onwards with a vast alacrity, that, with his glossy coat, and pricked-up ears, and tiny fetlocks, made many and many a passer-by turn round ; to say nothing of Ben and Trim, perched up on the seat behind.

Avoiding the ordinary road to Hampstead, the rich working silversmith of Hatton Garden drove his good wife along Oxford Street, by Baker Street and the Regent's Park ; and when they were off the stones and could hear themselves

speak they commenced a pleasant chat of their young days ; of Hampstead as it was then—a pleasant place amidst green fields, and not as now—a mere suburb of London. To this discourse the good silversmith added divers enriching points of information ; for he was well read, as a citizen of London ought to be, in its ancient history ; and he told her of Hampstead Heath, and its old Roman road from Verulam, and its manor and seat of Bellsizes belonging to the Abbey of Westminster, and the connexion of that manor and seat with the name of Vane the younger, who thence from its fine avenue was taken to the Tower ; and of the judges at the time of the great plague, who came hither to the shadowed terrace on the Heath, to try the assize prisoners ; and of Richardson, and of other great literary names since his day ; and lastly, the good old citizen spoke of the view which lay from Hampstead to the vale of Harrow ; that Norden, writing in the days of Queen Elizabeth, said of its fields, that at the time of harvest the husbandman who waited for their fruits “could but clap his hands for joy to see this vale so to laugh and sing.”

From the Finchley, or rather the Barnet road, they turned up a real old English lane, which leads by Child's Hill to the Heath. Here the good silversmith went off from antiquarianism to love in his discourse, and brought to his sweet old wife's mind a long-ago evening in their days of courtship, when in this very lane he had asked her to be his, and she had not said “nay.” At

this, matron and mother as she was, the good gentlewoman bent her face; for to it stole a tender shame worthy of our human nature and her woman's heart.

At this point Ben and Trim were permitted to descend, and to run off with wild barks of delight; whilst Frisker, it must be confessed somewhat reluctantly, went more moderately onward, past strips of roadside common rich in tender greenness, past dipping trees and clumps of fern and gorse, past runnel and broad-spread hedge-row, till he came out on the wide, solitary gorse-clad heath, bathed partly in the glory of the setting-sun. As was their custom, Mr. and Mrs. Gibbons descended from the gig, and leading Frisker to a point of greensward, threw the reins on his neck; thus leaving him at perfect liberty to nibble the short sweet grass, or rub his nose in the fresh greenness of the fern. When they turned round to proceed on a short walk up and down beneath the lovely sweeping hedge-row and its evening shadows, they were surprised to see that Ben and Trim had made cheerful acquaintance with a little Isle of Skye dog that evidently belonged to a lady—a young lady sitting on a seat commanding a sweet point of the broad landscape. She sat very still; so very still, and looking away across the wide sweep of fern and gorse, as evidently not at first to be aware of passers-by; but this, rather than otherwise, excited the observation—almost curiosity—of the good couple; of little Mrs. Gibbons especially, who had a fine

sense of what was peaceful and modest in the behaviour of her sex. In keeping with such demeanour was the young stranger's dress; very plain, very simple and unexpensive, yet clean and fresh and excellently contrasted—each thing suiting the other with rare fitness, from shoe and stocking, and gown and glove, to the crowning bonnet. Yet the good couple did not see her face; but when they had retraced their steps, returned again and approached near enough, the tasteful eye of the good old gentlewoman was struck by a little sight—very simple, as all exquisite nature is, yet very beautiful. The waning, yet richly flooding sun lay partly on the sward at the young girl's feet, and partly on her dress of a dark brown hue, amidst the folds of which drooped downward from her crossed right hand a spray of the common meadow butter-cup, turned back at about half its length upon its own long stem. The flowers were unusually fine, as though the root had grown in a moist rich soil; and as the fine sun played upon the yellowness, and upon the rich greenness of the shining leaves, nothing could exceed the exquisite grace and contrast of the whole. It was a little gem of nature worthy the most skilful fingers of imitative art. One large and glittering leaf hung below the stem; and the simple beauty of the whole attracting for the instant the old gentlewoman's gaze, she did not see, till she looked up, that the young girl was also regarding the flower, as though suddenly struck by the singular beauty of the

little golden buttercups and buds thus lying amidst the russetness of gown and leaves, as stars rest still at night upon an emerald sea. But the young girl lifted up her face, and buttercup, and bud, and leaf were in the instant forgotten by the good little old gentlewoman, who saw only *that*, the human flower, in all its youth—its touching look of tenderness, its earnestness and self-repose. There was a look, too, in it of depth and power—a sort of acute earnestness in its expression, as though some congenial thought on which it was pleasant to dwell had been suddenly aroused. This might be so; for nothing of spirit that is pure and divine but what will betray its presence in the human face. Their eyes met: the trim little gentlewoman longed—irresistibly longed—to speak; but her fear of rudely trespassing restrained her. However, Ben and Trim, that by this time were on a footing of most companionable friendship with the little thick-coated stranger, would have brought about a speedy acquaintanceship, there is little reason to fear, had not a loud call from a distance interrupted, at this precise moment, the first preliminaries. Looking round, the little old gentlewoman and her husband beheld, on a gate in the distant hedgerow, a boy of about twelve, dressed in the quaint garb of the Blue-coat School, who, waving a large bunch of luxuriant wild-flowers, jumped off and came quickly running to where they stood. Judging, and rightly, that this was the young lady's com-

panion, the good couple bowed slightly and passed on. When they reached the end of their grassy walk, and turned again, they saw that the stranger had quitted the seat, and passing away amidst the fern, was gradually climbing the grassy hill towards Hampstead, her arm round the schoolboy's neck, and the little dog frisking wildly on before. The old silversmith and his little wife were much disappointed—the old gentlewoman especially; and it was not till they had watched the strangers out of sight that they continued their walk, or disturbed Frisker from his nibbling pastime.

Through such fields as are yet left, the young lady and the schoolboy made their way to Camden Town; there they took an omnibus to Islington, and prepared to alight at the "Angel." They were alone in the vehicle; and just before it stayed the young lady took a purse from her pocket, and drawing from it a bright fourpenny-piece, slid it into the schoolboy's hand.

"I would give you more, dear Frankland," she said, as though apologetically, "I would indeed, my darling; but I am not rich just now."

"I ought not to want any, Luce," was the frank laddish reply; "but——" Here the boy hesitated, as though there was warfare between his love of sweetmeats and his better love for his gentle sister—for his sister she was.

"There, there," she said, as she bent her face down to his fair one; "keep it, and you shall

have more next week. I know your weakness, Franny, for sweetmeats; and I would have you just as honourable about the payment of a tart or lollipop as about a larger thing. Now, good-bye, my darling, or you will be late. Come and see me next holiday afternoon, and by that time ask good old dame Carden what we talked about as we crossed Hampstead Heath."

"Yes, Luce, that I will. Dame Carden will do it, I'm sure; for she knows those rich silver-smiths of Hatton Garden so well. Her little dead grandson was a blue-coat till he went to be their apprentice. Now, good-bye, pet; take care of my gold-fish, and recollect, as you finish the gooseberry-pie, that I thought it a special one."

In a minute more he had kissed this fond sister, pinched the dog by way of good-bye, slid from the omnibus, and was off with the speed of boyish feet. More gently and thoughtfully his pretty sister took her way towards Canonbury, which it was just dusk before she reached. Indeed the silvery moon had risen above the tall poplars which skirt the New River as she unlatched the little garden wicket of one of a row of pretty secluded cottages that had on the other side a large sweep of garden running to the water's edge. This lesser garden as she entered smelt as though newly watered—which it had been by a tall, pale-faced man, looking like a clerk or warehouseman, who, kneeling by a little border near the door, was trimming away

the dead flowers and leaves. It was plain to see that he was a lover of flowers. The young girl stayed a minute to speak to him, and to admire the beauty and freshness of the little plot of ground.

"Yes, ma'am," said the man, rising, and speaking with the utmost respect, "the garden is a great comfort to me. Many and many a time through the toilsome day the thought of it cheers me on. Nor do I ever think of it without blessing God that I came here, and for the change wrought in me; nor without thinking that you counselled what saved me to my wife and children."

"It is always pleasant, John Laurence," replied Lucy Bassett (for such was her name), "to find that given counsel has proved good, as it has in your case. You were certainly very ill when I first knew you, and could not have recovered—at least for a permanency—if you had not moved away from the town. Now, good night! The garden looks charming, and will have its usual admirers in the Sunday passers-by to-morrow, I am very sure."

She was passing into the house; but the man stayed her, to add some carnations he had gathered to her posy of wild flowers, and to tell her that Miss Moggs (from whom he had brought a note) was coming by-and-bye to make a call, as his master, Mr. Bowyer, had come up from Margate unexpectedly that afternoon, and had



brought a basket, which she wished to deliver in person.

The young girl said she should be glad to see so kind a friend as Miss Moggs. Then she went in, and staying for a minute by a cheerful open doorway that looked into one of the trimmest, prettiest kitchens imaginable, was met by a good-looking matronly young woman, the mother of five or six children, and the wife of the careful gardener.

"I am glad you are home, ma'am," she said, with kind yet respectful interest, "though it is a bright night, and not yet late. But we shall eat our supper the better for your being safe. And see, ma'am, how nicely I've got on—the children all in bed save Nelly here, supper ready, and everything done—even to the brightening up of your plate as usual—which Nelly did not put into the basket, but laid upon the table."

As she spoke she moved her hand, as though to show the exquisitely neat parlour-like little kitchen, with its row of newly-cleaned tiny shoes, its store of Sabbath linen airing by the fire, the large family gooseberry-pie just home from the baker's, and the cloth laid neatly for the humble supper. It was altogether the picture and pattern of an humble English household.

Expressing her pleasure at this pretty, homely sight of cleanliness and good management, Lucy was passing onward to the staircase, when Mrs. Laurence bethought her to say that Miss

Moggs would take supper before she came, and therefore Miss Bassett was not to prepare any for her.

"If that is the case," said Lucy, gladly, "you shall bring me my usual cup of chocolate, Mary. This I will take, and then sit down to draw till Miss Moggs comes, for I must make use of my dear Franny's pretty wild-flowers whilst they are fresh and with their bloom on them."

So saying, she passed up the neat carpeted stairs into such a pretty sitting-room, with a bedroom opening from it, as to be quite a little fairyland of freshness, taste, and comfort. Its broad open window, with trim muslin curtains, looked out upon the larger garden and the tall poplars, through whose green leaves the little river bathed in moonlight shone on its silvery way. There were little old-fashioned oil-paintings about the room, an oval glass in a filigreed frame, modern prints, principally of objects of sculpture, old china, a bird-cage, a piano, and a profusion of thriving plants. Beyond was seen, through the airy open door, the lesser room all clad in white—a little room most exquisite—and both were richly lighted by the silvery flooding moon.

Putting her flowers down, as it were carelessly for the instant, on the table, Lucy's first thought, when she had removed her scarf and bonnet, was tiny Penn, the dog; the little, untiring, honest friend through good and evil fortune, as she had proved, young thing; and finding him, as she

suspected, already gone to bed on his little mat, she brought his saucer of water, let him lap, then gave him pretty coaxes and soft words; whereupon, after many grateful caresses that proved his grateful heart, though tiny dog he was, he curled himself up anew, and went off forthwith into an amazing sleep.

When Lucy had read good Miss Moggs' note, which was but a line or so, she drew her table towards her window, intending to take her supper before she lit her lamp. As she did this, she suddenly stopped, arrested by the beauty that lay beneath her gaze. The buttercups that had lain so golden in the sun, and had already made her ponder as to their practicability for an artistic purpose, lay cast by chance from amidst the other meadow flowers upon one of the newly-burnished spoons; the stem upon its handle, the green leaf below the stem within the bowl, so as in fact to be a floral spoon resting on the scintillating silvery ore, as though for garniture. But fashion it in silver, and art and nature will be one!

With the intuition of genius, the young girl saw all this. Yes, here was the lovely purpose. She would draw the design for a cream-ladle; the flower and stem should form the handle, the drooping leaf the bowl; it should be the BUTTERCUP SPOON—the one that should go by other hands to the great silversmiths in Hatton Garden.

Oh! go and show the hand of genius, little

cups and buds! Rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air, your simple, graceful, natural loveliness must be transferred by art; for touching consequences lie with thee, O simple, little, tender flowers!

Thus Lucy Bassett stood when Mary brought in her chocolate. She hastily partook of it, set aside the tray, lighted the lamp, brought forth her drawing materials, and with fresh fair hands, beside the broad window open to the pure evening breeze, sat down to draw those pretty cups and buds and shining leaves, as they lay on, and in, the silver spoon.

It was full half-past ten, when a cab stayed before the little Canonbury cottage, and a plain, middle-aged woman, alighting therefrom with a capacious basket, went up-stairs to Lucy Bassett's room. She knocked, then gently opened the door, looked round it, and went in, as though fearing to intrude. But in an instant Lucy was by her side, had taken both of her hands, had put down the basket, had led her to a capacious chair by the window, and making her sit down in it, drew a stool for herself to her feet. There was such tenderness, and truth, and respect in good Miss Mogg's face, as she looked down upon the young girl, as to give to her pallid, homely features a touch of maternal beauty.

After a kindly greeting, Miss Moggs looked towards the table. "I hope you will forgive my coming late, dear child," she said; "but you

know that I have to head our large supper-table, and that Saturday night is our latest in the week."

"Oh! I know all so well, dear Moggs," said Lucy, "that you must spare apologies. I am only glad, amidst all you have to think of, that you find even a moment for a little solitary stranger like myself. It is very good of you, and proves how truthful you are."

"Who ought to be to *you*," replied Miss Moggs earnestly; "for think what you have been to *us* and to our hard duties—lessening them in number and length, and so adding pleasure and profit to the leisure given, that our great retail house has become a proverb even beyond St. Paul's. For though Mr. Bowyer has a good heart and sound practical sense, it was not till he discovered the advantage his children had reaped from your instruction, and learnt to prize your friendship, and to heed whatever you suggested, however indirectly spoken, that he made those changes in our hours of business that have been such a blessing and a profit to those he employs. For he is a worthy man, always willing to follow out improvements when he can be once made to see their value. Thus he is a contrast to his kindly yet vulgar wife, whose growth only keeps pace with her husband's riches in two things, those in regard to the feeding and adornment of her body."

"I grant, dear Moggs, that she is fearfully common-place and vulgar," replied Lucy

kindly; "and both these things were a great affliction to me when I first became instructress to her daughters two years ago. But she has a good heart, and there is always hope for improvement when such is the case. As for what I have done for you and the rest of the business household, it must not be made too much of, or I shall grow vain. It was but giving a few hours through the winter evenings, and instructing some of you in music, others in drawing, and others in French. These things are not worth over-estimation, dear Moggs, seeing the task was one of pleasure; in the matter of drawing, especially, for I have perhaps a gift that way; and I believe, do most earnestly believe, that where God has so largely endowed us with a rich and perfect faculty, it is our duty, our richest, our most religious duty, to endeavour to impart to others less endowed as much benefit from such faculty as we may."

"Yes," said the poor lowly shopwoman, laying her lips down on the dear young forehead as she spoke, "it is just such a Christian thought as you would have, my dear one. It is Christ's law active, giving of our overplus to our weaker, poorer brother. And may He in his good time give to *all* his gifted creatures impulses like to these, and we shall have nothing to fear either for Christianity or for man."

And then she laid her face closer to that young forehead, as though her humble spirit prayed.

It was Lucy who spoke first, and who raised

up her earnest face ; so earnest that Miss Moggs had never seen it look thus before.

"Dear friend," she said, "you can hardly fancy what I would do if I had the power. Oh yes ! I sometimes think if dear old uncle Richard would but return from sea, so that I had less care for myself and Franny, less toil for mere bread alone, that I would strive to do much that is new for art ! Oh ! yes I would, so that all of our sex that had a taste might find easy means of cultivation, if only for the sake of its own moral and refining influence. Oh ! yes I would—but the saddest part of poverty is that it too often robs talent of its richest fruit."

She sighed, and Miss Moggs sighed. Miss Moggs was poor, for she had an aged mother depending on her for support ; and Lucy was poor, for she had much to do with her narrow income, and could but cleave to all the habits and duties of a gentlewoman.

But in a few minutes Miss Moggs was her old, cheerful self again. "Come, come, this will never do !" she said ; "I have not yet told you my errand, or delivered my message. The truth is, Mr. Bowyer came up unexpectedly to town this afternoon to see Mr. Fletcher, our Spitalfields manufacturer, about a further design for the Exhibition silks ; but though—"

"I thought that business had been already settled," interrupted Lucy.

"Yes, it was, before Mr. Bowyer went back to Margate on Thursday ; and as I sent you word

Mr. Fletcher had accepted and greatly praised your design; but the truth is, I think that Mr. Bowyer received one unexpectedly this morning by post, and so came up to town at once about it. He did not say who supplied it, but I fancy it was some one whom he met at a dinner at the London Tavern a few weeks ago, and with whom, I heard him tell Mr. Fletcher, he had had a most remarkable conversation as to the relation of art to British manufactures. It was this conversation, I fancy, that led Mr. Bowyer to suddenly change his opinions with respect to the practicability of the Exhibition, and to come forward with so magnificent a subscription as he did. As to this design, if it works well in the *mise en carte*, it will rival anything that the Lyonnese can produce. It will be a raised pattern in silver pile upon a rich dead white-corded sarsnet, and is to be called the 'silver wedding silk.' Of course it will be costly, but beautiful in the extreme."

"It will, indeed," replied Lucy, "if Mr. Fletcher praises the design thus, for I consider his taste of a very first-rate kind. But I am going to see if I cannot produce some art designs for the Exhibition. Hitherto I have only had two purposes in all the artistic work I have done—that is, self-improvement and painting little pictures for dear old uncle Richard in case he should return. But that hope seems dead; and therefore, now our dearest, only friend seems lost to us for ever—for we must expect nothing from our worldly uncle John—I must, I feel, turn my talent to a practical



end, if only for dear Franny's sake, whose prospects in life rest on me and my endeavours. Indeed I think, so far from being unhappy, I shall reap much from making my love of art serve a strictly practical end."

"I think so, my dear," said Miss Moggs, "for it is one of the most religious ends of beauty thus to bring it down to the lowly purposes of common life; but as for pecuniary means, my dear, I think I have some good news to tell you. Mr. Bowyer said to me this very day in the counting-house—for mine has been a long service, eight-and-twenty years, and has earned his confidence—that your salary is going to be raised, for he thoroughly estimates all you have done for his three young daughters. Indeed he told me, with tears in his eyes, that many notice their lady-like manners and solid improvement, and that such is the pride of his heart. And, indeed, from what he said indirectly of their mother, I think improvement is taking place with her too, as she wants you to pay them a visit at the end of next week; and you know, dear, there was a time when she dreaded what she calls 'gentility;' whilst at the sea-side, she liked to bathe, and eat shrimps, and ride donkeys, without too nice observance. But you'll find her note in the basket."

Lucy was about to rise, but Miss Moggs restrained her. "I have something to say to you, something to give you, something . . ." And here good, plain Miss Moggs hesitated, and, much to Lucy's surprise, could say no more.

At length she pulled a soft, long parcel from her pocket, unpinned two pins at either end, and opening it, there lay a little pile of exquisitely-worked cambric pocket-handkerchiefs—perfect gems in their way.

“Pray—pray—” faltered Miss Moggs, striving to make a formal speech, but failing terribly—“please, Miss Bassett, accept these pocket-handkerchiefs as the humble offering of Sarah Moggs and the eight-and-thirty young women employed by Mr. Bowyer, the large silk-mercier and linen-draper of St. Paul’s Churchyard, for your goodness to them through the evenings of two successive winters, whereby they are greatly improved both in accomplishments and general knowledge. They wish it were a better gift—but as the needlework is their own, you will, perhaps, for that reason, estimate it as though it were worthier.”

This was a grand speech for poor Miss Moggs, and she could proceed no further.

Already did the young girl kneel at her feet—already had she burst into tears—already had she striven to speak, but could not; and Miss Moggs, crying too, and willing to restrain Lucy’s faltering words, raised her up, folded her in her arms, kissed her tenderly, and then leaving her, glided from the room before Lucy was aware of her intention. She ran down-stairs to call her back to pour forth her grateful thanks—but Miss Moggs was gone.

Of course such tears as those of happiness are

soon dried. When this was so, Mary came upstairs to admire the pocket-handkerchiefs, and to help to unpack the basket—a very store of riches in itself, for at the top were letters, next a very wilderness of roses and geraniums, then some choice fruit, then beneath thick leaves fine Pegwell Bay shrimps and prawns fresh that afternoon, and beneath these a store of shells and seaweed—the very richest treasure of all to Lucy, for these would serve her art.

They were carefully put aside; the flowers in water, the fruit divided between Mary's children, and a store for Franny; the prawns and shrimps were put in portions so that John might carry them early in the morning as little presents to kindly neighbours for their breakfasts. This done, all things set right again, and Mary gone, it was nearly twelve, and time for bed. So, when all fitting preparations were made for the morrow, the young girl went to rest—the pure and balmy rest of the innocent and true in heart.

On the morrow, as she returned from church in true Sabbath nicety, a little lad, dressed in the garb of one of the city charity schools, brought her this note, written in large hand, and on a piece of paper that seemed to have served a previous purpose of wrapping up cakes or sugar barley:—

“DEAR SISTER LUCE, (Secret.)

“Poor old Dame Carden fell down on Friday

and hurt her leg. Please go and see her to-day, and take her some tea in your pocket—she is so fond of tea—a cup will make her well. Please go! she is so good! A boy I know, calls her mother, that hasn't one. It was only on Friday that she made him a beef-dumpling.

“From your affectionate brother,

“FRANKLAND BASSETT.

“P.S.—Tell Dick I've got him his groundsel.”

This characteristic note made Lucy laugh heartily. But she was sure to obey so innocent a desire. When she had therefore rested awhile after dinner, she put on her white silk bonnet and black cloak once more, lessened the contents of her little tea-caddy, and strayed in the garden on her way to gather a few fresh sprigs of mignonette. But upon second thoughts, not liking to convey them in her hand, she hid them in the bosom of her gown, where they would be little crushed. Then she went on her way, riding partly, to the quiet little court in Bucklersbury, where in one of some dozen quaint almshouses the poor old widow of a once opulent merchant dwelt.

Much did trim little Mrs. Gibbons talk over that Saturday night's supper; the more that Grinling enjoyed the nice delicacy that the good old servant had with thoughtful hand prepared. Seeing this, and her heart thus set at ease, little Mrs. Gibbons gave full account of Frisker's goodness, and that of Trim and Ben, and had

much, moreover, to say of Hampstead Heath. But these were insignificant subjects compared to what she had to say of the young stranger; and so accurately did she describe manner and apparel and face, that it would be surely no fault of hers if Grinling, when he met the stranger, did not recognise her at once. But he listened, as we listen to indifferent things, simply for listening's sake.

Nor were you forgotten, little cups and buds! Rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air, your simple, graceful, natural loveliness was thus remembered and heard of by those who, through a life to come, must wear you by their hearts. Oh, simple, little, tender flowers!

There were two things in the Gibbons' household that were performed like clockwork, as everybody knew. The one, that every Saturday morning through the year Grinling went early to Covent Garden Market, to buy the freshest and rarest flowers for his mother's breakfast-table; the other, that on every Sabbath morning she went on his arm to church.

So on this Sabbath morning, as for years they had done, they went their way. She as neat, as kind, as excellent a gentlewoman as any in great London city; he thoughtful and reserved as always. Walking, as was their custom in fine weather, they gladly left at length the glaring sunshine; and descending the wide steps into the aisle of the grand old city church, so grateful

were the shadows of arch and vaulted roof, so cool and fresh the air that swept around, as to give to both the inexpressible sense of prayer, of gratitude, of reverence, even on the threshold of that holy place.

The service over, they went, as was their custom, towards the altar, where usually sat a group of aged women. The one they sought was not there; but they soon learnt the reason why from one of the others.

"Mrs. Carden, ma'am," she respectfully said, "met with a slight accident on Friday by slipping down the outer stairs. It is no great harm, but the doctor says she must keep still for a few days."

"I am indeed very sorry," replied good little Mrs. Gibbons with much concern; "please tell her I made inquiries, and that I will either call or send to her this afternoon."

The truth was that every Sabbath morning this good soul gave to this other good, though poor and widowed soul, five shillings; not from any ostentation or merit of giving in so holy a place, but from incident at first, and afterwards from the habit of long years; till at length the pious offering was given, and was received, as part of the wholesome duty of the sacred day.

But when afternoon came and dinner was over, the little gentlewoman, tired with her morning's walk, felt unwilling to venture forth again; so, talking of sending Prissy or the younger maid with it, she took out her purse, and wrapped a

bright half-sovereign in a little piece of silver paper—the sweet gift of the old to one poor and far older.

It had, however, another bearer. Usually through the summer young Mr. Gibbons spent his Sabbath afternoon away from town, though not in visiting. But journeying to such a place as Hatfield Chase or Hainault Forest, he there passed the golden afternoon in the still shadows of glade or quiet fields; to think, to read, to breathe the pleasant air; to see nature in her vernal spring, her affluent summer, or her russet autumn. Such things are Sabbaths in themselves!

So now he prepared to be the messenger of the little gift, on his way for a still hour in Hainault Forest; at this his good mother was glad, for nothing was better for him than the sweet air; and moreover, as he was the very soul of tenderness and generosity, she knew he would add to the pious gift. So when she had settled herself in her armchair for her afternoon's nap, when he had spread her fair handkerchief across her face to keep out the sun, when dear little purring Sweep had tucked himself up beside her, when the old silversmith had put on his spectacles and taken his book, though probably not to be read long, but to be off in a nap too, then this good son went on his way.

It was between four and five o'clock when he entered the little court in Bucklersbury. It lay half in shadow, and the stillness of centuries seemed to brood over its quaint precincts; yet

there was an air of cheerfulness and well-being about it very pleasant to behold. The buildings round were nicely whitewashed, and kept in repair; there was much ivy about, with jutting gables peeping from it; there was some turf in the midst of the court, a quaint sun-dial, and a very ancient well that yet gave crystal water. The basement of each of the twelve houses seemed used as a cellar, for only a little prison-like window looked out on the court, whilst each first story, approached by a flight of stone steps and a little balcony, led into the dwelling, consisting of a large sitting-room and two bedrooms. Thus removed from immediate contact with the ground, and with large windows, these little habitations were airy and cheerful in the extreme.

Up the whitest steps, in the sunniest corner, Mr. Gibbons sought the dwelling of the old widow; but when he reached the little ivied balcony he found that she had a visitor, for the door standing open, he could not only hear but see within. As he stayed for the instant, doubtful what to do, he found that Mrs. Carden's visitor was reading, not talking, as he had at first suspected; and struck by the exceeding beauty and tenderness of the voice, he could but listen. It was a young voice, a woman's voice—it read the Scriptures. The longer he stayed the more intently was he an auditor; he was not a man usually moved in such matters, but he was now. Looking within the pleasant room as he stood, with curiosity incited by his admiring ear, he saw reflected, in a long



oval mirror on the wall, the picture of the reader and the listener—a venerable woman in a large chair, her injured leg on a rest; a little tea-table beside her, spread with two cups and saucers, and a small packet, which he rightly divined was a gift—for it was the contents of the small Canon-bury tea-caddy. On the other side of the table sat the reader, a young woman not more than twenty, if that; so exquisitely yet plainly dressed as to strike at once his artistic eye. She was without her bonnet, and her profuse dark hair brushed plainly from her face permitted him to see it. Its intelligence, its childlike earnestness, struck him more than its beauty—it was the face of one who, reading of the Heaven to come, did so without a straying thought to earth. He had a vague impression that this was the face that his mother had seen and admired the night before. The more this impression grew, the more did his interest. But the reader was coming to the end of the chapter! To stay there and be voluntarily a listener to what conversation might follow, would be no other than a crime; he therefore drew back into the balcony, added a sovereign to his mother's gift, put both into a self-sealing envelope he had in his pocket-book, and wrote on it with his pencil, "From Mrs. Gibbons, and with Mr. G. Gibbons' best wishes." This done, he stepped forward to the threshold to find a chair or table on which to lay it unobserved. To the right of the open door stood a table, as he had surmised; and lo! as he put his tremulous hand

to it to lay down the letter, there was a little white silk bonnet and a pair of outstretched gloves, on which were placed some sprigs of odorous mignonette. No sooner thought of than done! He laid down the letter by the gloves, took up a sprig of it, and stepping from the threshold, went without further lingering down the shadow of the stairs. It was a theft certainly—but that of the bee from the honey-cup of the overladen flower—a theft that needed not deep casuistry to find in temptation the source of a large forgiveness.

Oh! little golden cups and buds! Rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air—is there not something more than art, though set in costly silver, coming of thy fresh, pure, vernal loveliness, oh, simple little graceful flowers?

At the foot of the stone steps he met an aged woman coming towards them with a tea-kettle. It was some kind neighbour who had been boiling it for Mrs. Carden's tea. He stayed her, and said he had been up the steps, but found that the old lady had a visitor.

"Yes, sir," replied the woman, "the good old missis sprained her leg on Friday, and badly too. So that kind friends—for she has many—are dropping in to see her. The young lady that is with her now is the sister of a blue-coat boy. For ay, sir, she takes wonderfully to some boys in that dress, 'specially if they be orphans; for ye see, sir, her only little grandson was a blue-coat,

and a wonderful child at drawing and such things; ay, sir, and it was a sorrowful thing that he died; for the great silversmiths in Hatton Garden were as good as parents to him."

The tears gathered in Grinling's eyes, for the death of this lad had been one of the saddest episodes in his life. So he hastily concluded the conversation, and giving her a trifle, told her of the letter for Mrs. Carden, and that friends would expect her in Hatton Garden as soon as she was better.

Guessing by this who it was that had addressed her, the old woman hastened up the steps, to tell Mrs. Carden of the visitor and the letter. And the old lady, finding, by the handwriting and the contents of the letter, who had thus been so thoughtful of her poverty and sorrow, confided to Lucy, as soon as they were alone, all the touching history of her dead grandson and the Gibbons—a little history of such charity, and goodness, and high deeds, amidst the common-places of life and the temptations of wealth, as to set that Hatton Garden home, in the tenderness of the mother, the duty of the gifted son, the worldly yet good-natured humour of the old father, like a picture before the listening girl. This led her to speak of her own needs. For people like these she would work worthily; and before those little out-stretched gloves were on, or the little bonnet covered her shiny hair, the good soul knew all about the Buttercup Spoon, and had promised, as soon as she possibly could, and the drawing was ready, she would go with it to Hatton Garden—

the bearer of the design, but the keeper of its secret!

\* \* \* \* \*

Here Miss Eden pauses, for the more aged ladies now linger in their walk, and otherwise show signs of weariness. At a hint from her mistress, Nanny brings forth chairs, which, with others borrowed from adjacent rooms, accommodate the little company. Thus seated, in the most pleasant portion of the cloister, with the now rapidly descending sun lying around them, and in glory at their feet, the story is recommenced, and read onwards to its close.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the shadows of Hainault Forest that evening? Oh, no! But from Bucklersbury to Charter-house Square, and round it many times; then back to Bucklersbury; from thence somewhere else, then back again; and this so often to and fro, till at length the evening fading into night, and the well and the ivy, and the plot of grass, and the quaint flights of stairs, all mingled in one common shadow, divers old ladies, piously meditating at their casements' ledge, were glad when the porter closed the courtway gate, for so often had some stranger flitted to and fro, as to make them suspect the intention of a burglarious descent upon their few relics of long past prosperity and years. Poor ancient souls! be well content, no harm will come! For though you know it not, the Law of Life is about you and around you; and your old courtway, with its

stillness and its dust of centuries, can be no more exempt from the consecrating presence of the purer human passions than Cheapside or the Strand, where every inch of wall, of pavement, and of window has been or is a shrine to some poor human heart! Though why or wherefore may have passed, as shadows pass, into those great Silences that gather up into themselves the good and evil of our mortal lives!

On the Friday of that same week, at four o'clock precisely in the afternoon, an omnibus from the city paused before Hatton Garden. From it briskly descended a lean old woman with a big umbrella, as also one older and much slower of foot. When she reached the pavement—a matter of difficulty and time—she went on, with the assistance of her lean friend and the big umbrella, into Hatton Garden, and so by painful degrees to the house of Gibbons and Son, manufacturing silversmiths. Good Prissy answered the door, for it was at the private door the lean woman knocked.

"Why, bless me," she said, lifting up the stocking she was darning as she spoke, "is it you, Mrs. Carden? I'm very glad to see you, ma'am" (good Prissy did not forget that a gentlewoman stood before her), "but missis, I'm sorry to say, is out—she went to Margate yesterday, and will not be back till to-morrow evening."

"I thought it possible she would be out," was Mrs. Carden's reply; "for when she was so good as to call upon me on Monday, she told me of her intention, her son wishing it, of going to the

sea-side for a day or two; but I want to see Mr. Grinling—I have a little business with him.”

“I scarcely know if you can,” was the answer, “young master is so busy. The counting-house is like a fair, with not only *our* people,” added Prissy, with emphasis, “but with those nasty forrenners that wear beards, ma’am, down to their very waists. Oh! I wish I could give each of ’em a razor, with instructions how to shave. But walk in, ma’am—I’ll step up to the young master’s room and see.” So saying, she ushered Mrs. Carden into the pleasant parlour already described, whilst the lean woman and the umbrella were consigned to the kitchen by Prissy’s young coadjutor.

After some parley—for it was not customary to admit womankind into the warerooms—the old servant was permitted to speak to her young master. He was engaged with several strangers in the little studio or counting-house already mentioned, and turning his face round as Prissy stepped within the door, spoke hastily, like one oppressed with multifarious business.

“I really cannot, Prissy, see anyone—let them tell *you* their business.”

“But it’s Mrs. Carden, sir,” pleaded Prissy; “she wants to see you a minute on business.”

As Prissy said months after, “You might have lighted a candle by young master’s face, and then as suddenly put it out again by its shadow, it turned so red, and then so deadly pale.”

“Well, well,” he said, as he removed a wine-

glass holding water, and a sprig of something in it, across the table, as though into shadow, and came hurriedly towards the door, "make her some good tea, and entertain her, Prissy—I will be down as soon as possible."

He must indeed have dismissed the strangers very speedily, or deferred their business till another day, for before Prissy had sweetened Mrs. Carden's second cup of fine Pekoe, or entered very far into the mysteries of a confidential chat, her young master came in. When he did so, she respectfully withdrew. The declining sun was at this time shedding its full glory into the pleasant parlour, and so fell fully upon the bending figure of the old woman, both as she sat, and as, an instant after, she strove to rise; but Grinling telling her to keep her seat, sat down near her. Hurriedly apologising for intruding, Mrs. Carden proceeded at once to let the object of her visit explain itself, by diving her trembling hand into a capacious pocket, and producing from thence a very square parcel, folded flatly in a thick silk handkerchief. This undone, there appeared another handkerchief, of finest cambric, smelling strongly of ancient rose-leaves and long-plucked lavender. This, too, undone, there was a delicate wrapper of paper; and then she held towards him, down low in the rich flooding stream of sunlight, so that he might behold it clearly and at once, a little drawing, its own explicative of the design for a spoon—a floral spoon; the stalk, the handle; the flowers, the garniture; a broad and flowing leaf, the bowl!

Yes! show the hand of genius, little cups and buds! Rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air, your simple, graceful, natural loveliness is here made richly to adorn a common, useful thing for daily life! Beauty, and Truth, and Science, all in one! Oh! simple, little, touching, lovely flowers!

He looked at it an instant; then, rising hastily, went towards the window! He stood there so long and so immovably, that at length his visitor began to think that he was either offended with her for her intrusion, or that the design was unsuited to his purpose.

"I fear, sir," she said at length, "that I have come at an ill time, and that—"

He came slowly towards her, even whilst she was speaking; and his face was very pale and earnest, even more so than usual.

"So far from intruding, dear dame," he said, "you have done a real service in bringing us this most appropriate and lovely design—for very lovely it is, and very original—no common hand did it, I am certain." And he looked at her as though he asked a question.

"The only thing, sir," Mrs. Carden said, reverently, "I must not say is, who did it. I promised faithfully I would not; but it is some one who would be glad of a little more work of the sort, for—"

"A female hand did this," he remarked, as though again questioning her; "and some one new to the work of metallurgic design."



"I really may not say, sir. If, however, you would accept other sketches, and—"

"Of course, of course," he said, impatiently interrupting her, as though he did not wish her for a moment to suspect but what he would willingly and nobly remunerate such a genuine artist, "such work *is* worthy of reward. I assure you this design is of the utmost value to us, as in this point we have hitherto had fears of failing in the coming Exhibition; and this too in the great staple of our manufacture. I should give five guineas to an ordinary artist for an accepted design; take five for this on account—and as soon as our modeller has been able to judge of its working detail, further remuneration shall be forwarded. I must not even guess the value of such a genuine piece of work, lest I should do injustice."

As he spoke thus, he took five sovereigns and five shillings from his pocket, and laid them upon the table before the astonished dame. Lucy had told her to ask a guinea, but here were five! She could hardly speak for astonishment; her hand trembled, large tears dimmed her eyes; good soul, she would not have been more rejoiced if the gold had been her own!

He saw at once that she was deeply moved, and this confirmed his suspicions as to who was the artist. Indeed, almost to a certainty he knew; for here were the very buttercups, and buds, and leaves his mother had spoken of as hanging in such graceful golden brightness in the glorious

setting of the sun. He knew it all, and would have fain known more. But just as he was about to speak of his visit of the previous Sunday—a matter Mrs. Carden had already briefly alluded to, in thanking him for his kindly gift—he was called away, though not till he had solicited further designs, particularly for spoons, from the hand of the unknown artist; and begged that Mrs. Carden would ride home in a cab, which one of the porters should fetch when she was ready. But for a full hour after his departure, the tea lasted, and with it the confidential chat between herself and the good old servant.

That night Mr. Gibbons ate his supper, smoked his pipe, and read his newspaper, without other company than the dogs and pretty purring Sweep; whilst Grinling, curtained in his little glass room, worked on and on, till far into the night; for not only was there large necessity for his doing so, but he preferred being alone. The design of the buttercup-spoon was reared up before him; and as he thus worked on through the silence of the hours, he felt as though his own genius gathered a new purpose and a new inspiration by the presence of those little drooping cups and buds, once beautiful in nature, once golden in the sun—yet not less beautiful in homely, touching art!

On the morrow evening he went to Blackwall to meet his mother on her return from Margate. It was growing dusk as he led her along the platform to the railway carriage, but the lamps shone brightly around. Placing her in safety,

he returned to find a porter who bore a box and hamper she had brought with her, when he was arrested by seeing pass by, and mingle with the crowd, a Blue-coat boy, carrying a small Isle of Skye terrier on one arm, whilst his other hand was grasped by some one wearing a white bonnet. For the instant he saw the sweet face beneath, and knew it again—it was the same that had been bent over the Holy Book beside the widow's chair. But all was lost to him before he could make his way into the crowd; and when he looked and found his search useless, the train to his dismay sped on, and he had to wait till another was ready. But the brief delay was filled with busy thoughts; he had seen that pure young earnest face again; and he who had hitherto been proof against all extraneous influences beyond the threshold of his simple home, and all love but that of a deep enthusiasm for art, now admired, nay loved, with a depth and fervency not common to men. When his good mother, waiting for him at the Fenchurch-street Station, saw him look pale and anxious, the good simple soul attributed it to over-work, and prayed a little prayer of thankfulness within her heart that the morrow was the Sabbath, and he would rest!

From this date a quiet month went by, busied by no incident touching these matters, except by the arrival, through an unknown hand, and addressed to Grinling, of the design for another spoon. It was very beautiful—but nothing such a masterpiece as the one foregone.

It was on a Saturday morning, about ten o'clock, that the good son came from the counting-house into the parlour, where his tender mother sat busy at her needle-work. She was instantly struck by his earnest manner and his earnest voice, so much so as to show alarm in her face.

"Do not be frightened," he said in that voice that for near thirty years had been never heard by her ear but it had increased the beating of her heart, "what I have to say to you, and show you, is no matter for alarm. But we must at least be undisturbed, for I have something to say to you in confidence."

"Of that I cannot be sure," she answered, "for —, the bullion-dealer, is with your father, and they may step down for lunch. But come up with me into my little dressing-room. *There* no one will interrupt us."

Wonderingly, for she was quick to see that some matter of deep interest moved her son, she led the way up-stairs into a quaint little room, richly stored with a fine cabinet, and other things, and looking down by a sort of oriel into the pleasant ivied court so often mentioned. When in, she closed the door, and going to her son's side within the window, waited for him to speak. But instead of this, he put his arm within her own, as was his old custom, and taking from the side-pocket of his loose coat a morocco case, he touched a spring, and, opening it, showed her within, fashioned in burnished silver, THE BUT-

**TERCUP SPOON.** It is impossible to describe her speechless wonder, or her questioning looks ; but he proceeded to tell her, and that hastily, as though afraid of the interruption of her interrogatories, a matter for larger wonder ; making her sit down beside him on the quaint window-seat, he half avowed, yet with an earnest guilelessness worthy of his thoroughly honourable heart, all the little history of his admiration, and of the design.

"And now, dear mother," he said, when it was ended, "you must help me in this matter, or else I do not see my way clear. You must not think me weak or failing in manhood that I thus confide, for it is because of the very depth and purity of my love that I tell you this, who through life have walked with such a holy woman's feet. And who can guide me so aright as you who rocked my cradle ; as you who made my manhood what it is ? It is you who must try and learn from Mrs. Carden this secret she hides, for to me she will say nothing."

"My Grinling," sobbed the dear and faltering mother, "my son, my darling son, you give me joy and comfort beyond expression ; doubly so, as linked with the little mystery of the spoon. For some past years it has been an exceeding grief to both your father and myself to find that you had no thought and no inclination for marriage, and seemed dead to all attraction beyond the narrow bounds of our home. It has been a grief, because *we* longed to have small feet

pattering round our hearth, and baby-voices lisp our name. It has been a great grief, because, in case of our decease, you, with your single-mindedness, would be easy prey to the false and designing, if only for the sake of your large wealth. You must forgive my saying this, dear child. But now all may be changed. Now I may rock upon my breast a new generation of our name, with the same love as I rocked you. Oh! pray this be!—pray that this little creature be your wife, that my heart yearned to with a feeling I cannot describe; for if it be, I shall say that God's hand was with us when he led me to see those flowers, so golden in the sun."

Even as she had been speaking these latter words, she had risen and gone towards her ancient cabinet; and now unlocking a very tempting-looking drawer, beckoned her son to come to her side. He did so, and was moved by what he saw, through the unfolding thereby of the secret of a longing mother's heart. It was filled with all sorts of such things as women prize and save. Exquisite old lace, old filmy cambric, beautiful embroidery in India muslin, brocaded silk, jewels and amethysts in quaint old rings and brooches, carved fans and tiny ivory boxes, baby's caps and frocks, yellow with long disuse; and countless other things, such as old ladies treasure up and save for beloved daughters. This drawer was no exception to the rule, for here for years the trim little gentlewoman had stored away endless valuables, so precious in her own estimation—

whatever they might prove to others—as to make her call it, in her secret heart, “*my daughter's drawer*,” and therefore one that had beheld many silent tears whenever her son's indifference to wedlock had shown itself more than usually marked and decisive. Now, she confessed this ; and Grinling could but smile at her quaint oddity in storing things in which *he* could see no value, except it were the proof they gave of the sterling worth and beauty of her love for him, and those he might call his. If ever they had been friends before, they were in a double sense so now ; and mother and son, in this their mutual confession of new hopes on the one side, and old desires on the other, stood bound together in the holiest bondage of filial and maternal love.

The result of a long and confidential conversation was that early in the afternoon little Mrs. Gibbons arrived at the quaint court in Bucklersbury, just at that hour in an unusual state of stir and commotion ; for divers of the twelve flights of steps were being cleaned, and the old porter was sweeping the walks round the strip of grass-plot and the well. But the earlier housewifery of Mrs. Carden enabled her to welcome her honoured guest in the neatest of chambers, where she herself sat making divers little tartlets, and savoury pies in patty-pans, for, as she confessed, certain small schoolboys that wore “*yellows*,” and had no mothers to think of them. But though, as usual, she was humble and thankful, and visibly gratified by Mrs. Gibbons' visit, nothing

would induce her to betray from whom she had the design of the Buttercup Spoon. "It was a secret that had been intrusted to her keeping, and till leave was given she might not tell what she knew." Though thus impenetrable, she mentioned inadvertently Miss Moggs' name, and this in a way that led Mrs. Gibbons directly to suspect that through these means she should discover what Mrs. Carden kept so resolutely concealed. Without, however, hinting at the clue thus gained, she, after a pleasant chat with the good old lady, took her leave, and entering a cab was driven to St. Paul's Church-yard. From constantly dealing at the great shop of Bowyer Brothers, Mrs. Gibbons had a slight personal knowledge of Miss Moggs; so going forward to what was called her "department," she had the good fortune to find this kind creature half buried amidst a pile of costly foreign lace, that was being sorted and put into boxes for retail use. Glad of such an opportunity of addressing her, little Mrs. Gibbons at once entered upon an examination of the lace, bought a few yards to add to the treasures of her drawer, and then in a whisper, and after some apologies, questioned Miss Moggs as to the name of Mrs. Carden's visitor.

"It is on account of the design for that exquisite spoon, is it not, ma'am?" asked Miss Moggs, with a great show of pride, and in the lowest possible whisper. "If it is, I can tell you all about it, and very gladly too, for I can see no reason for



mystery or secrecy in the case. Please walk this way, ma'am;" and Miss Moggs, delivering over her costly charge to a confidential assistant, led the way through a side door, and up a wide staircase, with the air of one who had something very pleasant to impart, and who meant, like a genuine painter, to add to it some sweet touches of her own.

"My dear madam," said the good creature, before she had scarcely closed the door of the room into which she ushered the little trim gentlewoman, and I am most certain before the good gentlewoman herself had sat down, "the artist of that design is one of the most genuine and best of human creatures God ever fashioned—the noblest little woman I know; and," continued Miss Moggs, increasing in her enthusiasm, "an undoubted lady into the bargain. And I may be said to be a judge, Mrs. Gibbons, who now for eight-and-twenty years have lived daily amongst strangers." As she spoke thus, Miss Moggs took a chair, and drew it up to that of Mrs. Gibbons.

"And her name?" asked Mrs. Gibbons, quite as impatient to hear as Miss Moggs was to narrate.

"Miss Bassett. Lucy Bassett; and she has now been for two years daily governess to Mr. Bowyer's daughters."

"And she has a brother, a young brother?" asked Mrs. Gibbons tremulously, for she feared lest this link in her chain of hopes might be broken.

"Yes, ma'am, a boy of about twelve—a Blue-coat boy. And hence it is, ma'am, to this child, as sister, mother, friend, her acts are so pure and lovely. All her earnest labour with her pencil is for his sake; so that when his term at school is over, she may have the means for his further advance, let it be in what direction it may. Every shilling she has received for the design of the spoon is laid by like precious jewels for him, and him alone!"

The tears welled up from the heart of the dear mother. She would not restrain them, she did not attempt to conceal them; she buried her face in her upraised hands; and but with one desire—apart from all selfishness, even the selfishness of her maternal hopes—that they were, even at that moment, twined round this dear young creature, even for her sex's sake, even for that mercy's sake, that, like a boundless ocean, flows, ebbs, and flows through the universal heart of man!

Oh! little golden cups and buds! rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air! Your simple, graceful, natural loveliness is thus, through art, bringing a dear heart to your artist's side. Oh! simple, little, tender, humble meadow flowers! so radiant in the setting sun, so graceful in its sinking shadows!

Miss Moggs loved those tears; they warmed her heart; it was sympathy in keeping with her own.

"Miss Bassett, ma'am," she went on, "is a gentlewoman even by birth. She has an uncle a very rich rector of a village in Wiltshire, and another a captain in the navy, who has been unaccountably missing for several years. Her father was a much younger brother of these gentlemen, and marrying whilst he was taking his degrees at Cambridge, he was even young when he died from an attack of fever only four days after his little son was born. His wife did not survive him more than a year. Thus Lucy and her brother—for there were only these two children, though there is seven years' difference in their ages—were left to the care of these two uncles. Both were bachelors, and the one being almost always away at sea, they were naturally placed in the care of Mr. Bassett the rector. Still he was always more or less abroad, for he is a great collector of works of art; and thus the children were left to the care of a maiden cousin who kept his house. For several years, whilst the good seaman uncle came to and fro, her treatment of them was tolerable; but as soon as she fancied he was dead, she, to serve purposes of her own, commenced a cruel course of conduct towards both. Lucy bore it patiently for some time, hoping things might be better when her uncle the rector returned from Italy, where he had been long absent. It did not prove so, however, as this cruel woman had, by constant letters to their disfavour, changed his good-will towards both orphans. Finding her position to be such a hopeless and unhappy one,

Lucy came with her little brother to London. Here some distant relative of her mother placed Frankland in the Blue-coat school; and Lucy, seeking an engagement as daily governess, became instructress to Mr. Bowyer's three daughters. She has been so eminently successful with their education as to make their parents desire her residence with them; but nothing would induce her, I suppose, to quit the place where she lives at Islington, for it enables her to keep a home for her brother."

"Dear heart, and yet so young for this heavy struggle with the world," exclaimed the tender-hearted gentlewoman, lifting up her hands.

"Yes, not only for herself, but for others too," replied Miss Moggs with pride. "You know, ma'am, of course, that Mr. Bowyer's residence is in the Regent's Park. Well, ma'am, for the two past winters, after spending her whole morning there, this good young lady would return home; and then each evening, for five in the week, she set out from Islington at six o'clock and came here. Yes, here all the way to St. Paul's Church-yard to hold classes for our improvement in music, drawing, and general instruction. At first Mr. Bowyer smiled at her laborious trouble, and rather discounted it than otherwise, for he was more against than for the early closing movement; but when he began to see the effects, when he began to find the young men stay at home to join the classes, and understood from the housekeeper the great addition to the happiness and regularity of the

household caused thereby, he began to look more closely into this self-denying kindness, and was at last so convinced of its admirable effects, as to go hand-in-hand with Miss Bassett in every improvement. Only see, ma'am, for yourself, some of the results of his change of opinions."

As she spoke, Miss Moggs rose and opened a door, and showed Mrs. Gibbons a noble room, lately fitted up for the young people's especial use with two pianos, books, globes, and many other things, as assisting both instruction and amusement. And from this room opened two lesser ones, distinctly apart, for the separate use of the young women and the young men; that for the former being even elegantly furnished.

"All these things we owe to Miss Bassett," said good Moggs, leading the way back again; "and no wonder we all highly respect her—nay, love I should say, for there are those amongst us who can say so with earnest hearts." Miss Moggs stopped, for her eyes were full of tears.

"She deserves it," said the good gentlewoman, "though it is not always that genius and goodness go together. My son says her pencil is a wonderful one."

"Yes, ma'am, it is so; for others have said it. She inherits this taste from her uncle the rector, who is, I believe a great collector of works of art. But I hope, now she has given such a proof of her genius in respect to the spoon, that your firm will give her work—she has spare hours to fill up, and would be glad to earn money this way, I know."

"God bless the dear child!" said the silver-smith's wife, fervently; "only give me her address, and she shall not want generous or thoughtful friends."

Thus in a few minutes Mrs. Gibbons held the address of the little Canonbury cottage in her hand; and after some further confidential conversation with Miss Moggs, she took her leave; though not before, kind soul, she had bought another strip of filmy lace to add to the treasures of the deep old drawer at home. She had heart enough to have hidden Potosi in it at that minute.

Eagerly expecting her return, Grinling waited for her in the parlour. He knew by her bright happy face that her search had been successful, and he soon knew all the little history I have here set down. It was now arranged that she should after dinner, when Grinling had retired, break out the little history of the spoon to her husband, for as yet its fabrication had been carefully guarded from his sight; and that after he had seen it and admired it—as he would, for his taste was excellent—they should both set off to Islington, and there seeking an interview with Miss Bassett, exhibit to her the beautiful result of her design, and hand over to her what further money was due. One thing only the little gentlewoman was guarded in—that was, not to hint one word of her son's feeling for this young girl.

"But he will soon guess it, my dear Grinling," hinted the little gentlewoman; "your

father was always so quick at perceiving such things."

"Let him perceive," said the young man gravely, "when the time comes. But at present even suspicion would be premature and wrong."

So thought his mother. But, nevertheless, her face wore such sunny smiles, that day at dinner, as to be seen at once by the old gentleman.

"My dear," he asked, "what is the matter? Both you and Grinling look as if a fortune had been left you since breakfast."

"Well, David, we have had something to delight us, that is certain, and which shall delight you as soon as we have dined—only wait till then."

So when the cloth was removed, and Grinling gone, the good wife brought a little parcel from a drawer, drew her seat beside her old husband, poured out his customary glass of wine, and then, with her hand in his, told him the sweet tale, with its own illustration of the lovely work of art—  
THE SPOON.

I cannot paint his wonder, or his pleasure, or his admiration. All three were genuine and exceeding; one thing, however, I sadly fear—that the good little gentlewoman, in her volubility, dropped some word or other she ought not; for the old gentleman at once popped upon the secret, and guessed it, as far as guessing could.

"Well, well, wife, I see there is something

more than I'm permitted to know. But so this boy of ours gets a wife, and a good and pretty one, I don't care. He has been living too long in his dreams and his fancies, and his old bachelorhood, not for me to be glad of a prospect of change. Better late than never, even in matrimony."

"Hush, hush!" said his little wife, "it is wrong in you to talk so, and neither just to Grinling nor the stranger; though it is certain that our son deserves a good wife; for when he does love, it will be deeply and unalterably."

Thus checked in his surmises, the old gentleman now turned his attention again to the spoon, and so immensely delighted was he thereat, that he must go at once to speak to his son and to the foreman; then, as he returned, he went aside, and gave orders that dear old Frisker be then and there harnessed to the gig; and then he proceeded without delay to put on his Sunday coat, and one of his grandest holland shirts, with a big frill. He would not have made more fuss had he been going to carry the Buttercup Spoon into the presence of the Queen herself.

At length, somewhere about six o'clock or so, these good souls took their way from Hatton Garden towards pleasant Islington; Frisker in the sunniest of moods, and the two dogs perched up on the seat behind. They were going to make new friends as well as their master and mistress; and depend upon it, these little honest companions of our daily life love small episodes



of this sort as well as those enriched by reason and its attributes. Ay! the time *will* come when we shall be more human even in our humanity for the brute; for the more our knowledge approaches truth, the more will spread the radius of our charity and our tenderness!

When pretty Frisker stayed before the little Canonbury cottage, it might be seven o'clock. A tiny child, nursing a baby as big almost as itself, was seated on the little plot front of turf, and saying, when questioned by Mrs. Gibbons, "that mother and Nelly were gone to the shop," bid her and the gentleman walk up-stairs, for "the lady was at home." Very reluctantly the good gentlewoman consented, for she feared to trespass; but at length, leaving her husband in the care of Frisker, she entered the cottage, and went up the prettily-carpeted staircase, followed by Ben and Trim, who were anxious to see that little Penn, depend upon it! Some one within the room was reading or talking, but stayed the instant she knocked; and a sweet voice, other than the reader, said, "Pray come in." Opening the door timidly, half reluctantly, half withdrawing again, the old lady saw before her the same young creature and the Blue-coat boy she and her husband had met on Hampstead Heath. Rising immediately, Miss Bassett came forward, and the old gentlewoman advancing, they met in the middle of the room. The latter tried to make a grand formal curtsy of respect, such as she might have achieved in her younger days in dancing the

minuet de la cour, but stopped short, good soul, in the very middle of it. For she raised her face, and looked into that of the young girl, and the young girl into hers; and they could be no more strangers, from that very instant, than brook meeting brook upon the untrodden lea can keep from mingling their pure and lucent waters! Yes, there are human creatures that, meeting where they will, are at once friends—friends in spirit, if even no words pass between them; they seem to have met before—soul recognizes soul, heart flows into heart, their nature is one! This is a mystery of our being; a common one, however, that all more or less have had experience of; but not less is it a mystery for that! Beautiful as this is at all times, it was eminently so here; the tender human mother, with her large maternal heart, longing for a daughter on whom to beam her love; and a young, small, tender soul, cast on its resources, and needing, even for pity's sake, some thoughtful heart to think for it and of it, as only mothers think. Oh! in this human life no need so sure as this, to those who fight the desolate life of the lonely in great cities! There may be friends enough—every-day friends enough—callers—visitors—professors of a hundred things; but thou, O God! be merciful to those, be merciful to women, on whose uprising, on whose down-lying, on whose tears to-day, whose smiles to-morrow, no human care is shed! For the trial is mighty, and needing faith in Thee! Think of this, think of this! you who have homes and

parents, and discontent can never come! The hand that writes this, writes truth, and would write it in your hearts if it were possible!

But *here* the day of desolation is nearly at its close!

Did I not say so, little cups and buds? Rocked by the vernal wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air, your simple, graceful, natural loveliness is thus, through art, bringing fine heart to heart! Oh, simple, little, tender meadow flowers! Sweet buds and leaves of spring; sweet gilded cups of summer!

Failing in her curtsey, Mrs. Gibbons likewise failed in speech; but her hand rested tenderly on the young girl's arm.

"I think, ma'am, we have met before," said Lucy, "some five weeks ago, on Hampstead Heath. Come, let me give you a seat by my window—it is pleasant, though not quite so as where we first met." Saying this, she led the old lady towards the window, who passively obeyed, till reaching its strongest light she stayed again. Here she raised her ungloved hand, and laid it tenderly on the young girl's head.

"Is it possible," she said in a low voice, as though speaking to herself, "that one so very young, and small, and tender can have done so much alone and unaided for itself and others; is it possible that these little hands wrought the rare design we have come to tell you of—The Buttercup Spoon!"

Lucy coloured violently, as though annoyed and ashamed beyond expression. "I thought, ma'am," she faltered, "that Mrs. Carden would have kept my secret, for—"

"There is nothing to be ashamed of, my dear," said Mrs. Gibbons, "and nothing that need be secret. My name is Gibbons—I am the wife and mother of the well-known manufacturing silversmiths of Hatton Garden, to whom your design was brought. And I and my good old husband have come to-night, in a spirit of grateful and admiring courtesy, to show you the exquisite result of the design in its manufactured form, and to offer our earnest thanks, for it will prove of eminent service to us in the forthcoming Exhibition; spoons and forks having been for more than half a century a staple of our house."

Deeper blushes dyed the young girl's face; but eagerness was in her words, and tenderness in their tone.

"Oh! are you?—are you?" she repeated many times, as though doubting what she heard. "Are you the noble mother and tender friend Mrs. Carden and Miss Moggs have so often told me of? And has my little drawing of that spray served a useful purpose? Oh! I am so overjoyed; for, hearing nothing through these past weeks, I began to doubt its practicability for a useful end. I thought I must return the money for it, for how could it be mine? On this account I refrained from sending further work; and thus I thought my honest hopes were dead. I have been

impatient, I know—it is wrong of me; but then," she added, touchingly, as childlike she laid her hands down on the tender mother's arm, "I have known so much sorrow!"

"Poor child!" spoke the maternal heart; and her deep tears flowed up from their fountains, though wisely she restrained them; and added, in a cheerful voice, "But you must know no more, my dear, and shall not, if I can help it. But come, you must see the spoon—*we* are very fond of it, my dear, and so must you be." Then turning to the boy, who had been an attentive listener, she asked him to kindly step down, and stay with Frisker, whilst Mr. Gibbons came upstairs on the business which had brought him; "for, my dear," said Mrs. Gibbons to Lucy, "he *would* come with the spoon himself, as he has no faith, he says, in a woman's pockets."

Frankland obeyed with a schoolboy's alacrity; and followed by the dogs, that by this time had wonderfully improved upon their first slight acquaintance, went down-stairs. The old gentleman's footsteps were soon heard, and in a minute or so he stood in the room, and succeeding better in his grand bow than his little wife in her attempt at a curtsy à la minuet de la cour, came to where the young girl yet stood.

"My dear David," spoke the trim little gentlewoman, "this is Miss Bassett; but ashamed rather than proud of her sweet skill."

"Oh! this mustn't be," he replied, as he promptly held forth his hand; "no one should be

ashamed of industry and skill, when productive of results like this." As he spoke, he quickly ended his hearty shake, and going still further into the strong light of the window, took from his pocket a morocco case, that at the touch of a spring opened, and displayed the beautiful spoon. The brightness scintillated in the rays of the waning sun, and every silver leaf and flower was alternate light and shadow.

"It is very beautiful," he repeated slowly, as he held the case higher still, to show its contents to more advantage; "and I and my son are exceedingly obliged to you. Our firm really needed good designs in this department, and we shall be glad of others. That is to say, when I have paid for this!" Thus speaking, he put down the case on the window ledge, and taking from some safe pocket a tiny parcel, placed evidently there all ready, put open into the astonished girl's hands a ten-pound note and two sovereigns.

"This really cannot be all mine!" she faltered; "I have—"

"It is yours, madam," said the old gentleman, determinately—"fully yours. That is to say, an additional five pounds for the Buttercup Spoon, and seven for the design yet unmanufactured. And we shall be glad of more work at the same price."

Again the young girl regarded the sum of money incredulously; then bending her face down, burst into a passionate flood of tears. She had controlled herself till now—but she could no longer.

It was joy, and surprise, and hope mingled into one large whole that was not only akin to grief in its intensity, but also as unsubduable. She strove; but the more she strove, the more her heart throbbed, the more her tears rained down. Life through the past three or four years had been such an arduous thing—its trials and its needs had been so many—its struggles with adverse circumstances so repeated (though she had never spoken of them to human ear)—that now, when the end of these seemed come, when at last the great ocean of adversity ceased to bear her back upon its waves, when at length her foot seemed about to tread the verdant and the firmer land of kinder fortune, and this through the means of her great natural powers in art, no wonder that the momentary revulsion was too great, and tears flowed forth as crystal water from a new-burst fountain. They were the expression of a little, solitary, throbbing, anxious heart; they were the last signs of a sad past; the smiles to come of them, as sunshine after rain, the tokens of a brighter future!

Not liking to distress these good souls, perhaps, she slid from them into the adjoining room; and there, in a few minutes following her with anxious and pitying tenderness, good little Mrs. Gibbons sat down on the bed's foot by which the young girl knelt, and tenderly, tenderly as the purest mother might a dearest daughter, lifted the little sobbing face into her arms, and sobbing, too, kissed away those tears

of mingled grief and joy; tenderly, tenderly, as human mothers do.

"Oh! you must forgive me, please, dear lady," pleaded the young girl, as she grew calmer; "it is such joy to me to have succeeded in the art I love, for I see through it such hope for *him* especially—my young brother—that I have been unable to subdue its expression by these silly tears. And then this money," she faltered, "seems so much, that—"

"It is nobly yours, my dear," said Mrs. Gibbons; "and you must let us add to it our humble friendship and care. We shall so prize this, believe me."

"And I," said Lucy, "beg it, and shall prize it too. For I know so much of you from Mrs. Carden—know you so well, that ours seems an acquaintanceship long begun."

Thus this mother took this genuine little creature to her heart.

Presently Lucy rose, and going to a drawer, brought from thence a little box, which opening, she showed the dear friend what it held. Ten sovereigns already—now there were the others and the note. Oh! what joy to add this precious coin to coin; this treasure of self-sacrifice; this evidence of what the human heart has hidden in it of divinity!

Yes! the precious unseen treasures of the world are not those only which lie beneath the mountains and the seas; but in the inspired hearts of human nature, self-sacrifice, and faith, and hidden holy



deeds, make there a richness so abundant as to put comparison at fault, and leave their telling, till, in the great Kingdoms not of this world, all goodness of our mortal lives shall shine in glory and be known ! And none of all such riches shall seem more lovely than self-sacrifice, and the unspoken tenderness of poverty to poverty, and sorrow unto sorrow !

In a little while Lucy's tears were dry, and smiles came. She washed her face and brushed her hair ; and then, hand in hand with the old gentlewoman, returned to the sitting-room. Here the old gentleman grew jocose as to the novelty of weeping at good fortune ; and Lucy, to stay him, went down-stairs to order tea, and have a peep at Frisker. Nelly and her mother were now home ; so they bustled about, and got tea ready. A boy was soon found to supply Frankland's place, and thus before long the little company sat round the pleasant tea-table. The old gentleman admired the young stranger very much, and wondered vastly in his own mind *if* Grinling would think of a wife. Whilst Mrs. Gibbons, equally observant, noticed divers points of neatness, order, and so forth, and was much comforted thereby, for she was a nice orderly gentlewoman herself, and well knew what household blessings attend upon their exercise. After tea, Mr. Gibbons took Frankland a drive ; and Lucy and Mrs. Gibbons, going together into the pleasant garden, walked up and down upon the terrace beside the river till their return, talking

in low sweet voices of many things; the old lady lifting up her dress a little with either hand as was her quaint accustomed manner.

Before the friends parted that night it was arranged that Lucy should dine in Hatton Garden on the morrow.

Accordingly, after church next day, the old gentleman set off, with Frisker and the dogs, to the little Canonbury cottage. Here Lucy was ready; and some three parts of an hour afterwards he led her across the threshold of his quaint old city home. She was welcomed by the trim little gentlewoman herself, who led her tenderly by the hand into the sweet old parlour, and put this very little hand, this pretty servant of adorning nature, into that of her pure-hearted noble son.

Of course this strange abstracted man did not say much; not, however, believe me, abstracted to-day, but listening to every word, as we listen to entrancing music, and observing every look and gesture, as men do who are inspired with such a profound passion as his was; yet this so quietly as to be unobserved except by his watchful mother.

Then Mrs. Gibbons led the young stranger up into her dressing-room; and in a while returning, Lucy with that beautiful hair, and in that simple dress, perfect in all appliances, itself a thing of art, dinner was served up in a way quite worthy of old Prissy's skill; and after it the table, laden with dessert, was drawn into the

old bow-window, round which they sat, a group of happy friends, till the shadows of the evening fell. Then, after tea, Frisker was again put into requisition by the old gentleman, to take Lucy home; during which absence the mother and son talked over the happiness of the day, and the hopes that seemed to shine upon the early future.

Briefly I must relate succeeding circumstances. As was natural, the friendship thus begun was not suffered to drop from want of kindness and care on the part of the Gibbons. In a few weeks it became quite an established custom for Lucy to take her Sunday dinner in Hatton Garden, and for Frankland to go there often on his holiday afternoons, where, much to his delight, he was suffered to divide his time between Frisker, the dogs, and the old gentleman: to say nothing of tarts, and cakes, and gingerbread, manufactured by Prissy for his especial use. The Bowyers were now home from Margate, and Lucy again busy with her duty to the three young daughters; so, often returning thence by the city, she dined and spent the evening with the Gibbons. Here she was very useful with her pencil and otherwise; for it was a wonderfully busy time; and as she had work likewise to take home, and for this was generously paid, her wardrobe and her little rooms soon began to give signs of more prosperous days, and of ability to gratify her sense of the elegant and beautiful. This was pleasant.

to behold, for industry has not always the will or the power thus to give signs of the spirit within.

Between herself and Grinling a kindly friendship sprung up from the first, but to outward seeming it proceeded no further. They spoke unreservedly—they were master and pupil; in all the kind offices of daily life they were as brother and sister, but beyond this their friendship did not proceed. For whatever were Lucy's opinions and feelings as time progressed, she was carefully punctilious in her manner towards him, as she did not want them to think that she laid herself out to become the wife of the rich Gibbons' only son. She had no suspicion of the real truth—no suspicion of the deep love of that pure upright heart. On this point only there was reserve between herself and the tender little gentlewoman. On all else they spoke with the freedom of mother and daughter; but here, on the question the hearts of both burnt to speak of, they drew back the very words upon their lips, and were silent where they should have talked. Yet, to say the truth, Lucy liked Grinling from the first. As her knowledge of him grew—as she saw in him the tender son, the noble master, the man of consummate genius in his art—as she found in him the man of education, who was comparatively unknown as a great artist and an accomplished gentleman, through his singular love of a simple homely life, and because self-love, or vanity, formed no part of

his nature, she grew to love him day by day, with all the tenderness a little earnest woman could. Yet she did not speak of this, hint this, shew this—none, none but tiny Penn even saw the solitary tears shed on this account. But seeing them, he strove to comfort with all the tenderness of his little dumb nature. The Christmas holidays brought about a state of things that seemed full of promise for little Mrs. Gibbons' hopes. But a small incident soon marred them. A silversmith, of West-end repute, brought one day to Hatton Garden an exquisite piece of plate for a repair of the most delicate kind. It was a basket, said to be of Benvenuto Cellini's workmanship; and when young Mr. Gibbons was consulted as to its repairs, he could not help making inquiry concerning it.

"Why," said the silversmith, "it belongs to a very old customer of mine, a Wiltshire clergyman, of the name of Bassett, who, after an absence of three years in Italy, has returned to England. He is very rich, and a man not only of consummate taste in the fine arts, but also the possessor of one of the finest English collections of antique plate, rare paintings, and Etruscan amphoræ and jars. He is coming up to town at the Exhibition," added the West-end silversmith, "though his health latterly has been none of the best, and I shall then certainly direct his attention to your tripod, Mr. Gibbons, which rivals the best antique work I am acquainted with."

This honest compliment was lost to the ear of one who, with the ready self-torture of a lover, had listened to the first words, and those alone. "Yes, here was one of Miss Bassett's rich relations, and here the secret of her pride and coldness. She liked his mother as a friend, but of course she would not think of the son as a husband—a mere citizen of London. No! and this was why she repressed his advances." Such were Grinling's secret thoughts; very cruel and very unjust they were to the little creature of his love, who was only reserved out of mere shame and womanly delicacy. What was more cruel, he not only thought this, but determined to bury his passion in his breast, cost what it might. Thus from this time, when they met, Grinling was unusually restrained; he absented himself as often as possible, and pretended an excess of duty that was not real. His mother saw all this with real grief, nor could she learn the cause, as whenever she attempted to speak to Grinling of his attachment to Lucy, he turned off the subject in a way that admitted no recurrence to it. Even his confidence in his mother was gone. But he suffered a martyrdom in the meanwhile that no one could pity. Lucy wondered at his manner, for she could assign no cause for it, other than that he fancied she was plotting to be his wife, and so was reserved on principle. This idea was confirmed by something Mr. Bowyer said one day, jocosely, "about the Hatton Garden wedding;" and judging by this that motives other than friendship

were assumed to be the reason of her visits thither, she resolved to curtail their number, and absent herself as much as she could. This she did, under one excuse or another, till visits were only made at the intervals, first of days, and then of weeks. Thus seeing them fly away from one another, Mrs. Gibbons fell in, to a degree, with their humour, very wisely judging that things were best left to themselves. But though she did this, her affectionate regard for the young girl rather increased than otherwise. On the contrary, the good old gentleman, a deeper reader of nature than herself, saw the whole matter at a glance; and though his wife had not confided to him the secret of Grinling's love, yet he would talk of it to her, and tell her "it would come all right"—a blessing she rather hoped for than expected.

The winter months passed away, and April came. The good Bowyers had for some time noticed how pale Lucy had become, and thus increased their thoughtful care.

One day she stayed to dinner with them. After it Mr. Bowyer, who was in an extraordinarily good humour, produced five little cases from his pocket.

"Here, girls," he said to his daughters, "is an Exhibition ticket a-piece for you, and one for your mother. And the fifth I hope you will accept, Miss Bassett, as a token of mine and Mrs. Bowyer's esteem."

"I really—" began Lucy.

"You must not say a word, my dear," interrupted good-natured Mrs. Bowyer; "you know we are *your* debtors, and both I and the girls have set our minds on your accompanying us there on the first of May. You must not refuse."

"Nor to accept a dress for the occasion," added Mr. Bowyer. "I have already told good Moggs to choose you one and send it up by John, with any other thing she may think suitable. But," he went on, as though to stay her thanks, "why is it you now never go to Hatton Garden, eh? Old Mr. Gibbons told me so the other day."

"I—I—I—" began poor Lucy, trembling and blushing so that all could see—"they are busy, sir, and do not need company."

"Take care, little one," said Mr. Bowyer gravely, "that your small sin of pride—for even angels sin—does not offend, as it did us in the commencement of your duties. You are well born, but you must not presume upon it. The Gibbons', like ourselves, are plain people—but they are worthy and noble, as far as worth and nobleness can go; and their son is one of the finest as well as one of the most genuine human beings I am acquainted with—and great as well; for the tripod he has executed for the Exhibition is pronounced a masterpiece. So do not be wilful, little one; Grinling Gibbons loves you as few men love; accept his love therefore, for it is counsel I would gladly give my daughters; and



mind, for your wedding I will give you the 'silver wedding' silk; you may accept it with pride and honour, for though I have not told the secret before, this masterpiece of a pattern will have been drawn by the hand of your husband."

Overwhelmed with confusion, and half articulating something about its being late, Lucy hurried from the room. Saying, "Fie, Robert, fie!" Mrs. Bowyer would have followed; but she was restrained by her husband.

"No, Emily, no! let the girls go and assist her." Then, when they were alone, he added, "It is right to let her know this, for both she and Grinling are playing at the most foolish cross-purposes, and making the good old people as miserable as can be. There must be no more of this, for she is attached to him, from what Moggs tells me; and as for Grinling, there is not a night but what he walks to Canonbury, and paces up and down the other side the river till her light can be no longer seen. This is romantic enough for a grave, reserved man like him. But it is right to serve him if we can, or he'll otherwise break his fine heart, believe me."

Full of shame and contrition, yet mingled hope and joy, Lucy was glad to get away and hasten home: there, alone, she wept, contritely thought over the past, and felt that she had been very foolish. She longed to go to the Gibbons', to confess to the good mother her foolish, womanly sin; but little silly doubts and fears stayed her.

Good Miss Moggs sent the dress that evening by John; very simple and elegant it was; to it, acting on her license, the good soul had added a lace mantilla, with pretty handkerchief and gloves.

Gaining leave the succeeding day, she came in person to see Lucy, to arrange about a dress-maker, and to talk over the matter of the pretty bonnet that must crown the whole. But she found her really ill—spent, and anxious, and pale. But though Lucy attributed this indisposition to any other cause than the real one, Miss Moggs, from what was talked about and what was dropped, guessed what was really the truth, and determined to act accordingly.

At length that glorious May-day dawned, which must be ever memorable in the annals of this country—in the annals of civilization—the annals of the world; that marriage-day of Beauty to Utility, of Civilization to Art, of the Refinement that inspires to the Coarseness that degrades; that grand marriage-day of human interests to the Universal, the Pure, and the Exalted; that marriage-day of which a mighty Human Advance has yet to sing the fitting Epithalamy!

By six o'clock Miss Moggs came to Canonbury in a cab, bringing with her the fine product of the milliner and dressmaker's needles; but the household were already up and breakfast ready. It was soon over; and then, assisted by Mary, Miss Moggs performed her tender part of lady's-maid with such astonishing results as to effect,

that but for some paleness, and just a shadow on her spirits, this little human creature in her prime never looked more fair. There was no time for talk; and, strange to say, Miss Moggs was not talkative that morning, though, as she assisted Lucy into the carriage kindly sent by Mr. Bowyer, she whispered,

"Now be happy—this day will have brightness in it, depend upon it." So spoke this excelling friend.

The carriage had not proceeded far before the coachman stayed, at the request of a man dressed as a porter, who, advancing to the window, took from a basket an exquisite bouquet of greenhouse flowers, so fresh as to seem only that instant gathered—and holding it with great respect to Lucy, said, "These are for you, ma'am." Without other words, he touched his hat and disappeared.

There was but *one* that would send her flowers like these, and in this manner; her cheeks were not pallid now, nor less rapid the beating of her heart.

The Bowyers were all ready, and their own carriage at the door. Then, just after a second taste of breakfast for form's sake, Lucy accompanied Mrs. Bowyer to the carriage, and was followed by the girls and their good father.

It was yet early, but all the world seemed abroad; in the Park were countless thousands, and the carriages trailed the length of miles.

And there, from out the vernal beauty of the

trees, sprang that wonderful airy form of crystal radiance; those mighty ribs of giant yet invisible strength; that sign of a new architectural age, in which plague-generating cities of stone and wood are doomed inevitably to pass away; and men, through light and air, take on them a physical newness and a freshness, in keeping with the purer mind, the worthier heart, the more sincere and daily action of all which knowledge teaches!

In good time the party were pleasantly seated within view of the coming ceremonies of the day, themselves as happy as any of the happy thousands there. Thus time went on, and those ceremonies were begun and ended that will make that day memorable to coming ages as the first of those august holidays which, conceived in the wisest spirit of enlightenment, shall produce effects as yet but dimly foreseen.

As soon as the Exhibition was declared open, and the barriers, that had kept the nave clear during the Royal procession were thrown open, the many thousands present began to circulate. It was then that a person who had been an attentive spectator in one of the adjoining galleries, hastened down the nearest staircase, and making his way to where the Bowyers' little party were seated, accosted them just as they were about to mingle with the admiring crowd gathered in the transept. It was Grinling Gibbons, the silversmith of Hatton Garden. Mr. Bowyer, who knew him well, was struck by his altered manner and

appearance; though, in somewhat his old shy way, he rather avoided than looked round upon the little party, and addressed himself first to Mr. Bowyer.

"Would you," he said hesitatingly, "be so good as to spare Miss Bassett a little while? It is my mother and father's wish that she should see our stall to-day. Of course you are aware that there is a beautiful design there in which she has an interest."

"Of course we will," Mr. Bowyer replied, with a smile that meant much. "Emily, my dear," he continued, turning to his wife, and introducing Grinling as he spoke, "Mr. Gibbons wants to steal Miss Bassett from us. Will you spare her?"

"With pleasure," replied the kind friend, smiling too, "though it robs us of our best company. But go, my dear; Mr. Grinling will, I hope, take care of you."

"Yes, you must take care of her," said Mr. Bowyer reverently, as her father might have done, "for she is worthy of it. Now, good-bye to both—recollecting that we dine at six o'clock, and shall welcome you if you come; if not, we shall neither be offended nor surprised." He laid an emphasis on this last word as he spoke it, and placed the young girl's hand upon the arm of her lover.

As for Lucy, she neither assented nor dissented, but appeared to act by the will of others rather than her own; and only raising up her pallid face,

as it were, to say to those kind friends good-bye, passed on without a word. Nor did Grinling speak; he only drew the little hand within his arm, retaining it for an instant as he did so. Thus he passed quickly on into one of the comparatively deserted naves, the larger portion of the assembly still remaining in the transept to witness the Queen's departure. The choirs, accompanied by the great organ, were singing the national anthem, and the sun, shining at the instant, poured its full glory on the splendid scene, so that no time or place could consecrate more the unspoken happiness of these two most genuine human creatures. Since the yester evening, and his mother's confidential conversation with him after a visit from Miss Moggs, the world had become a new one to the shy, reserved man; now, under the same influence still, the music blending with the gorgeous scene, he seemed to walk in fairyland, or under the spell of enchantment. Yet there was still some pain, some doubt; a few minutes more, and the enchantment and the happiness would be perfect!

They passed on, both without speaking. At length approaching one of the areas facing the nave, Lucy, little as she looked, saw the tripod conspicuously placed amidst a gorgeous array of costly plate; the strong light scintillating amidst its airy branches, and shadows falling from where the deep blue of the porcelain cups was seen through the interstices of the filigree work. Though but few persons were in the nave, a

group stood round this portion of the Gibbons' great show of manufactured plate ; amongst these an elderly gentleman, leaning on a servant's arm. Some were admiring the tripod, and others the lesser articles ; but Grinling, saying something about they "could not see it now," passed on into the area. It was tenantless, for the attendants were engaged at the part opening upon the nave, and no one but themselves was there ; so he led her on towards a sort of screen, or waiting-room, formed of green baize ; though before he reached it he stayed.

"Why is it you have never been to see us, Miss Bassett ?" he asked.

"I have been ill, sir ; and—"

"But you could have sent us word. My mother loves you like a daughter—it was a real grief to her last night to hear of it from Miss Moggs. And but for this," he said, meaningly, "I should not have been here to-day."

"I—I—I, sir—" and in her anxious trepidation she attempted to pass on.

"But why ?" he said ; "you must tell me—I must know."

"Because, because—for several times when I came you went away—and—"

He had led her within the screen, and they now stood face to face, at least as far as it might be so, for hers still drooped.

"Was it of consequence whether I stayed or went—eh ?"

She had not words to answer ; but bending her

face down within her little hands, she burst into a passionate flood of tears—a woman's usual form of eloquence in matters of this sort; but here they were very real, for her conscience smote her; she had been ill and anxious for many days, and now she was so grateful to be forgiven and be loved. All these things were real food for tears, and she wept out so convulsively, that it was well that that grand chorus was still sung on.

Her face, however, was hidden no longer in those little hands, but upon Grinling's shoulder, for thither he had drawn her in his arms.

"I love you," he said earnestly, "as fervently as it is possible to love. I have loved you since the hour I saw you reading to Dame Carden on that Sabbath afternoon, and the whole happiness of my life is in your hands. Will you, then, be my wife?"

There was no false sentiment in her character; nothing but what was pure and truthful, almost to childishness. She looked up at once, and answered, "I will, dear Grinling, I will." And hiding her face again, she said, "Will you forgive me my naughtiness—my wilfulness? But—but—I did not want you to think that I loved you because of your mother, or that I appeared to seek you for—"

He loved the word "naughtiness," for it was a household word; so he kissed her last tears away as he added, "I, too, was wrong, and need forgiveness. I thought you proud and distant on account of your well-born relatives. But my



error is at an end. Now thank and bless you, dear, for your willingness to walk through life with me, and for consenting to give joy to those dear ones in the old Hatton Garden home. But we have much to talk about that we cannot here. Now we will go to a place I have already thought of, to some cool paths in the Twickenham meadows, and there spend this richest day of our lives."

Again he dried her last tears in the manner I have already said, and was leading her from the little partitioned room, when footsteps approached, and Wilcox, a good old servant in the Hatton Garden business, entering, handed Grinling a card. A glance assured him how things stood, for this love affair and its connexion with the beautiful design had been a great subject of gossip in the Hatton Garden workrooms; but he affected to take no notice.

"If you please, sir," he said, "the gentleman whose name is on the card, who is at present staying at Mivart's hotel, will be glad to treat with you for the possession of the tripod, at your own price, should it be for disposal."

"*To-day* I cannot attend to business, Wilcox; though you may say it is already bespoken by Royalty."

"And the Buttercup Spoon, sir—I have already had several inquiries."

"If needed, fac-similes can be had at our ware-rooms. *That* identical spoon—the first one from the mould—cannot be parted with on any con-

dition; and recollect, Wilcox, to bring it home with you early this evening, as I shall have occasion for it; and please just give this enclosed card to my mother." He took a card and pencil from his pocket-book, and wrote on the former, "I shall be home with you by-and-bye, to bring you a joy;" put this in an envelope, and gave it to his foreman, who, as he moved away, stepped back for an instant.

"If you please, sir, I forgot to tell you that Mr. Bowyer has just been to me to say that if you like to take his carriage from the ranks, and use it for an hour, sir, you can. It will then be in time for him and Mrs. Bowyer."

"Thank you, Wilcox, I will; it will be the very thing. Now recollect, this card to my mother, and the spoon when you go to Hatton Garden in the evening." Good Wilcox, with a smile of pleasure, withdrew, for he loved his young master sincerely, and was rejoiced to see such happiness come to him at last.

Grinling at this instant looked at the card the foreman had brought, and with an exclamation of surprise handed it to Lucy. On it was engraved the "Rev. John Bassett." For a moment she turned pale, and that old look of pain that had been so often there crossed her face. But in a moment she recovered, and laid it down upon the little table. "Oh! not to-day, dear Grinling," she said; "let me not think for one instant of these old shadows. Let me cast them behind me, as though they had never been; and only have in

thought the joy that is to be mine in cleaving to you for life, and calling your glorious mother mine."

"You say true, dear one, this is no day for shadows; so now we will go," he said, when he had drawn her to his heart once more.

So, avoiding the nave and its throng, they went away together again into the glory of the sunshine and the beauty of the scene; all things as it were consonant with their unspeakable happiness; even the last notes of the choir and pealing organ seeming to bless their parting feet, and hallow with their sublimest dying whispers the golden promise of their coming lives!

Oh! gracious Lady Queen, the happiness of thy people is the richest, most enduring jewel in thy crown! And of it, as it shone this day a glory and a wonder to the world, no trait of it, multiplying and excelling as these were, was richer, or more worthy, than that within the small, pure, human loving heart I tell of!

So by carriage and railway they went to those green, still Twickenham meadows. There through the golden afternoon they talked, till shadows fell upon the river, and veiled the topmost boughs.

Ten minutes before the dinner hour Grinling's envelope and card reached his mother's hand. With tremulous joy she showed it to her husband, who the previous night had been publicly admitted, as it were, into participation of the great secret.

"Well, my dear, well," he said, "I'm glad it's

all settled at last, and that for once in his life Grinling has behaved as if he really belonged to this world. As this is so, Prissy had better serve up the ducks and peas, as there is no knowing when these young people may present themselves."

He was quite correct, for they did not come either at dinner-time or for a long while after—not even by the time little Mrs. Gibbons was dressed in her very best gown, or the holiday tea-service of silver was got out, or the richest china set, or by the time the younger servant had been to and returned from the nursery at Fulham with fresh flowers for the centre of the table, or by the time everything was ready and waiting. But the dear mother was very patient, knowing that the great joy was at hand; and this the more that Prissy, coming in to deliver the Spoon, related all that Wilcox had whispered to her respecting the "young master."

At length, when daylight was nearly gone, and the old gentleman had dropped off into a little dose, as likewise had the dogs and Sweep upon the hearthrug, the dear mother thought she heard a cab stay in the street, and footsteps and voices at the hall door; still she sat like one not certain, or one who waited for the joy to come to her, as children purposely delay the tasting of their richest sweetmeats. She did not know that Wilcox and Prissy watched by the hall-door with almost as anxious hearts as her own. At last the room door itself was quietly opened, quiet feet

crossed to where she sat; and before she could rise, nay even look around, her son's arm was about her neck, two little hands were put within her own, a small young figure knelt tenderly, tenderly down beside her.

"Dear mother," said Grinling, "I bring you your great joy at last—the purest, truest, most genuine little creature for a daughter. Love her and accept her for my sake and her own."

Such a scene followed as it is impossible for me to describe, the old gentleman being aroused, and joining therein. In it were combined the pathetic, the tender, the joyous, and the congratulating; but *I* think the pathetic prevailed, for joy, like grief, owns to the baptism of tears.

The old gentleman put his pocket-handkerchief into his pocket, and asked, "When?"

"In two months," replied Grinling—"not a day longer, for certain."

This positive information brought the old lady to think of her duty as hostess; and ascertaining, after much questioning, that these young people had had no more substantial dinner than a bun, gave divers orders immediately to Prissy, and forthwith conducted the little soul she loved so tenderly up-stairs to her dressing-room. Here there was another scene of whispers, and congratulations, and tears, not finally concluded till the old drawer had first been peeped into, and its sweet ancient perfume wafted round the room.

At last the little company were seated round

the tea-table, Ben and Trim included, for they had been taught to sit on a chair, and dear old Sweep, tucked up beside the plum-cake, purred out a most amazing song as to length and tenderness. As the old gentleman said, they only wanted Frankland, and Frisker, and Penn there, to make the company complete.

"Dear Franny and the dog will be here, I dare say, by-and-bye," said Lucy, "if Mr. Bowyer tell him that—"

"That you ran away from them to-day," suggested the old gentleman.

Tea was not over when a most astounding long and loud rap was made at the hall door, and soon after Prissy was heard to say, "You really cannot come in to-night, sir—master and missis are particularly engaged."

"But I must!—I'm not come to see them, but my niece."

"Grinling!" said Lucy, springing from her seat and turning very pale, "that is Uncle Richard's voice!" She reached the door just as it was opened, and a tall, weather-beaten old man, with but one arm, came in. He recognized her in a moment, as she fell almost fainting into his only arm. He bore her towards the light, exclaiming as he did so, and this seemingly without consciousness that others were present,

"My dear, dear child, what a long separation ours has been—and what a sorrowful one! for I have learnt what your trials were in Wiltshire, and how you left that cruel home and fought

your life here. Dear, noble little one! so good and yet so fair. But I shall be here to protect you now, though I am but a poor maimed old man, as you see."

Lucy looked up into his face, almost doubting whether it were or not her kind old uncle.

"I feared we should never meet on this earth again, dear uncle," she said; "but it is a joy beyond expression. Yet why did you not write?"

"You heard," he said in reply, "that my ship was on a voyage of survey round the Falkland Islands. One fine morning I left it with our surgeon and naturalist on a brief exploring expedition to one of the islands; we were suddenly attacked whilst there by an ambush of armed natives, who killed my two companions and three seamen, and disabled me in my right arm before I could escape. They rifled and then sunk our boat, and conveyed me in their canoe to some inaccessible spot in a remote island. Here I remained their captive, suffering much pain from ill usage and my disabled arm, until nine months since I was rescued by the crew of an American whaler, and conveyed by them to Quebec. Here I went into the hospital, where, after my arm had been amputated, I recovered in a great degree. At my request the good surgeon who attended me wrote to you several letters."

"I never received the letters, dear uncle—I never did!"

"It was not likely, dear child; they fell, as most other things, into the hands of that cousin

Marplot, in Wiltshire, who read, but fortunately did not destroy them. Some short time since your uncle, in returning from the continent, found strong reason to suspect her honesty and truth in several things; this led to inquiry and search, and then the whole bubble burst. Our old steward, who had been reluctantly silent for many years, spoke of what he knew, as did others; my letters, too, were found, and her persistent cruelty to you and Frankland was made clear to your uncle. Nothing so distresses him as this latter point, for he had placed such implicit faith in all she said against you, and was led to believe that you were proud and wilful in deserting his roof. He is, however, anxious to make every reparation in his power. We came up to London together last night, and he bid me seek you out to-day, when my business at the agent's was over, and express to you his deep regret and sorrow for the past. You shall therefore see him to-morrow, and hear his plans respecting Frankland. But at first I thought I should not find you out, dear child, my clue of you was such a vague one, nothing more than that you were governess at a rich mercer's in St. Paul's Churchyard; even then I should have failed but for a good creature—a Miss Moggs." All smiled, for Miss Moggs was a good angel everywhere.

"Uncle John was at the Exhibition this morning," said Lucy, "and wanted to purchase the silver tripod, Grinling's—I mean Mr. Gibbon's—beautiful work."



The old uncle looked surprised, hearing her thus speak of the young man.

"And he would have purchased something else, too, if I mistake not," said Grinling, with exceeding pride, as taking a morocco case off the table, he touched a spring, and showed the BUTTERCUP SPOON. "The pattern of this your niece drew, Captain Bassett; and a lovely one it is."

"It is, indeed, sir, as far as I'm a judge. Ay, she was always clever. But hold it a little more in the light, sir; my eyes are dim. Ay, now I see it! It is beautiful, my darling child; to be so good, and clever, and pretty all in one is something rare."

"Dear uncle," said Lucy, tenderly, "you must love that spoon, for through it I gained these dear friends you see here. And—and—" she faltered, as she hid her face upon the old man's shoulder, "it has brought about my promise of to-day, that I will be Mr. Gibbons' little wife."

"Is this so?" exclaimed the old man with surprise. "Then I must be good to him for your sake. But now let me sit down, little one; I am not so strong as I used to be. There, sit on my knee, and let me ask you a hundred questions."

Tea was made for the old captain whilst he talked. In a little while he came to be so pleased with Mrs. Gibbons and the old gentleman, with Grinling, and with Trim, and Ben, and Sweep into the bargain, that he declared this to be the happiest night of his life. At ten o'clock other

visitors came—Mr. and Mrs. Bowyer, bringing Frankland and Penn, for they were anxious to learn how matters stood; and in no great while after humbly came Miss Moggs.

They had not been long assembled before the good old silversmith mysteriously withdrew.

In a short time he re-appeared, bringing with him two very dusty bottles, which he put down on the table with a vast show of triumph.

"There," he said, "you will taste here some wine which nothing but a solemn occasion such as this would induce me to take from my cellar. There are but eight bottles left—six shall be for the wedding, and the rest for the—hem!—but perhaps I'd better not mention what."

All knew what he meant, and smiled. Then he drank to the seaman's safe return, to the happiness of the lovers, and to that glorious May Day which in a myriad consequences, both human and divine, can never die.

Nor were you forgotten, little cups and buds! Rocked by the summer wind, cherished by the evening dew, fed by the balmy air, you in your freshness from the vernal fields were types of these pure hearts; you in your silvery scintillating richness now were signs that duty, love, and culture may be one!

\* \* \* \* \*

Lucy saw her uncle John next day, and there was such a reconciliation between them, as duty on one side, and an anxious desire of reparation on the other, could effect. He was somewhat

disconcerted when he heard that her coming husband was only a silversmith; but he was in a degree reconciled when he heard who that silversmith was, and recollected that whilst two-thirds of the princes and nobles who employed Cellini were forgotten even in name, that of the great Florentine will be annexed to art as long as utility and beauty are one.

That very week a house was taken in the Regent's Park, as Lucy had made it one of the conditions of her early marriage, in order that she might be near the Bowyers, and so accomplish to the end her duty to their young daughters. Here every day towards the evening Frisker might be seen conveying the sea captain and Mr. and Mrs. Gibbons, who all took a vast interest in papering, painting, and furnishing, though the home would not be needed till the winter.

On a day early in August the wedding took place in the grand old city church I have already spoken of. The bridal dress was fashioned of the "silver wedding silk," and the old seaman gave its trembling little wearer to her husband. John Bassett was not there, but he made costly gifts. His presence was, however, not needed, for there were dear hearts and kind hearts in plenty;—the old Hatton Garden couple, the Bowyers, Miss Moggs, and Frankland. The cold, the proud, the credulously selfish were best away.

After the grand wedding-breakfast these young people set off on a four months' tour to Italy.

They returned when the time of English fires and English snows was come, with their belief confirmed and strengthened, that Art, as applied to the great modern principle of Utility, requires, both for its reception and application, a wider range of intellectual cultivation than at present is considered needful. Till this view is taken—till geometrical principles are made the servant, not the master, of the mind ; till the education in our art-schools, or at least the education of the artist, shall not be confined to the pencil alone, the great purposes of Utility and Beauty in their connexion with Civilization will not be achieved. When it is, when a wiser cultivation of the intellect shall be brought to bear upon design in its threefold application to textile, fictile, and metallurgic art, then a new age of art will have arrived, and be productive of immeasurable good.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE STOLEN INTERVIEW.

THOUGH Shirlot is a place so old and peaceful, there are sorrows within its walls which gather strength even as the days shorten, and as the winds, growing colder and rougher, sweep away the yellowest of the autumn leaves. Winter is near—yet winter is already in the hearts of some.

The old gray-walled room is dearer to its temporary mistress than ever, for it is where the best and happiest hours of the day are spent. The fire is very bright, some old carpet swung on chairs forms a temporary screen and keeps out the draught, a pretty robin chirps on the evergreens outside the casement, as though to beg a place if winter come too stern and drear, and pretty Selina, tripping on errands to and fro, learns to love the quiet lady, and the lady her.

The hours thus spent in solitude and duty, and the far away lonely walks along the hill-paths,

through the forest, up wild and tangled lanes, and by-roads newly cut by the woodman's axe, through plantations of a few years' growth, form together the serene portion of each day; the rest is bitterness and woe in many forms. Scowls, and cruel words, and fits of gloom—the dashing of this or that with violent hands, and parsimony, and eager greed. The old insanity once more—the same which drove Lucy when a child of twelve years old from her father's roof, and which, turning home into a hell, ruined his profession, and broke his heart. The old insanity—the insanity of a nature which would be at strife with angels, and make war in heaven! In an age more wise than this, these moral aberrations will be referred, let us hope, to the hand of the physician; and where the disease is past cure, may there be sheltering asylums, as for drunkenness and crime; so that homes at least may be purged from the evils which such natures sow broadcast at every step.

There is one walk which Lucy takes, that, weird and wild as it is, is an especial favourite with her. About a mile from Shirlot lies a morass, the ground from which on either side rises into uplands, one of them of considerable elevation, for it forms the spur of a distant hill. Both uplands are wooded, the higher densely so, on one side with a great sweep of hoary woods, the other by the green and apparently limitless sea of a young plantation of firs. A very wide road—made purposely so for the rare passage of the

ducal carriage of the owner—divides these sections of forest land, but the road is not so trimly kept, but that as it ascends it becomes as picturesque as it is wild. Great patches of sward mark the margins on either side—a spring, a little pool, a clump of furze or thorn, a leaf-strewn hillock, give diversity to these floors of green, and no hedge separating the one green margin from the waving sea of young plantation, the tangled undergrowth covered by the mists of autumn becomes darker and darker, till its blue-hued green melts into the shadows of the distance. Now, in autumn time, this road is wild and drear enough, and rarely traversed, except by gamekeepers or the woodman, who lives in a little cottage built just where the scene is wildest; but though the autumn winds begin to sigh in dreary monotony through the sea of young fir trees, and the springs fed by rain and freshets rush with wild noise down to their levels, instead of, as in summer, dropping their silvery sounding drops in pretty sameness one after the other, the cottage is far from being a cheerless-looking place. The mistress, a pretty young woman, seems always busy, and if Lucy is late on her walk she stands on the doorstep, as though watching for some one she hopefully expects—for the fire shines brightly, and the tea-things are set.

On this particular afternoon Lucy stops to speak to the young woman for the first time. They have often gazed at each other

before, but the latter, being afflicted, as it seems, with country shyness, has withdrawn ere she could be addressed; but on this afternoon she stands her ground, makes her curtsey to the lady, and answers gladly to the questions put, as though to talk were a treat.

"Well, yes, ma'am, the place is a bit lonely, but I don't mind it so much as I did at first. I've got a good husband and a good home, and by-and-bye, when the baby's here, I shall feel it less."

"But it's a lovely spot in summer, though so solitary."

"Yes, ma'am—but the days are longer, and the master's away a bigger time. Then I wish I'd sister or friend with me. If I lived in a village I should have neighbours enough, but here, you see, the nearest house is three miles off. My friends live far away, and so I don't often see them. But a baby will fill my hands, and then the loneliness will be less."

"When does that come?" asks Lucy.

"Somewhere about next Easter," replies the young matron, as bending down her face she glances not a little proudly at her wedding-ring.

Lucy tells her to keep a cheerful heart till then; and then asking her if she can read, and hearing she can, she promises to bring her a newspaper or book sometimes, and so goes her way.

It is quite dusk when she reaches Shirlot, and



the light of the great glowing fires gleams like the divine eye of Charity herself through the high lozenge-shaped casements. Approaching the hall by the side entrance, through field and garden, she sees a man stepping on before her, who, turning aside through a gate, enters a building close at hand. It is a granary or malt-ing-house belonging to the Claytons' farm, and its one gable abuts on the road Lucy treads. Just as she is within the shadow of the gable the garden gate of the hall suddenly clicks, and some one, as though previously a watcher, flits past and so into the building the man has already entered.

There is something to raise curiosity in the manner and appearance of the small light-stepping figure as it flits by—but more as a childish voice is heard to say,

“Samuel—Mr. Clayton, I've been waiting many days to speak to you.”

“Ay, I meant to keep my word and meet thee as I promised, but I couldn't; the old woman is harder than ever—there's been no money to be had, and to make matters worse, that old devil at the 'Shirlot Arms' has been pestering her for the score.”

There are tears—there are low, stifled sobs—there is some whispered revelation made that startles him who hears it; and in return he expresses contrition, love, pity, and intent to do justice.

“I love thee better than all the world, little

one, I do; and as you spared me, villain and ruffian as I was, I'll do thee right, I will. You had my life in your power, you had—hundreds would have come home and told all—and the prison and the transport-ship would have been mine."

"But, Samuel," says the little voice, as by its very tone it seems to whisper itself out, grief-stricken as it is, half muffled on the breast of him who listens—"I've never told my great trouble to living ear. I never, never shall! My God!—no!"

There seems a question, but it is too lowly spoken to be heard.

"Why—why, Samuel—why, because, in spite of all your cruelty and all the wrong you've done me, I love you so."

There is further talk, there are further whispers, there is something said about selling a horse and getting money secretly, and a day is appointed in the ensuing month, and other matters settled—but all in words so detached and low-spoken as to make what they bear reference to unintelligible, unless Lucy would turn into an eavesdropper. This much she has heard because the girl's words of exquisite and pathetic grief have arrested her attention, but if thus listened to they will go no further. As Miss Morfe has wisely said, "Silence is wisdom at Shirlot," and this Lucy has already found.

When she enters her mother's room all is bright and cheerful except the old lady. Her cap is

superb, but her mood terrible. Beauty is in her aged face, but her words drop gall.

"There, I wasn't going to wait tea for you; if you don't like to be home at a proper time you may go without."

"Never mind, mother. I am sorry I am late, but something detained me. I will be home sooner in future. But I must have a walk—in London I always take one."

"I wish you were there."

"I am going soon, mother."

"No, you can stop the winter—but house-keeping is very dear, and money scarce, and——"

"I shall soon be able to pay you some. From circumstances I told you of, I am at present very poor; but in a week or two——"

"I daresay—ha, ha!"

Say no more, Lucy. Go to your peaceful books—*they* never disappoint, or embitter, or give back evil for good. Inhuman mother of a tender, gifted daughter, Shirлот holds no more solemn tragedy than this, of your inhumanity to her you bore!

## CHAPTER VI.

## ENTRANCE AND EXIT.

IT has been raining all to-day—a chill November one. Rain, rain, rain, nothing but rain, so that my landlord of “The Huntsmen’s Rest,” a newly-built inn on a road some four miles from Shirlot, saunters up and down out of spirits, though his possessions are many, and his wife pretty, and thirty years his junior. My landlady, too, is dull, though Mr. Jessop, her lord and master, bought her a new silk gown only last Saturday, and though the bar fire is bright and tea but just removed.

However, as she raises her eyes, and looks through the glass window into the kitchen, which is a picture of good housewifery and modern English comfort, a traveller enters, dripping with the rain. He calls for a mug of beer, lights the fragment of a cigar he has in his pocket, and taking his seat as near as he can to the glowing fire, attempts to dry his saturated garments. My

landlord makes an effort to talk with him, my landlady steps from her bar and does the like; the maid, whose rosy cheeks and bright eyes would evoke admiring glances from any other man, trips to and fro in vain as to a compliment. The stranger sits there sullen and depressed, averse, as it seems, to speech or company, his object being apparently to rest from great fatigue, and to watch the clock. There are signs that he is very young, though a mass of hair shadows and darkens his face—there are signs also that he is no dweller in the country. This Mr. Jessop tries to ascertain as he comes towards the fire to light his pipe, but the answer is a rebuff to curiosity.

"Well, well," is the worthy man's reply, "many that be thy betters would give a civil answer to a civil question. If thou hast a secret keep it, though as we writ in our copybooks when I was a lad, 'Candour marketh the good man'—and that, my lad, I've found as true a text as ever was set down. As to thy business it's nought to me, though I've a pretty near guess I've seen thy face up towards Shirlot, and that not remotely."

So saying, Mr. Jessop, having lighted his pipe, saunters to the door to look out upon the weather for the hundredth time.

As if disliking the observation thus directed towards himself, the young man stays no great while longer, but as the clock approaches eight, and when Mr. Jessop has retired into the bar, he

quietly departs, though it is still raining heavily, and the night is very dark.

"He glided out just like a ghost, master," says Sally, as she takes the stranger's money into the bar, "with never so much as a nod or a 'good-bye.'"

"No, Sally, any bit o' straightforrardness wasn't in the fellow. My 'pinion is—and the missis is o' my mind—that it ain't unlikely to be that young Hutchinson of Shirlot. If so, God help the miserable mother!—for, if all accounts be true, he's been a thorn in her flesh ever since he was a little one."

"And she such a good lady, sir," says Sally, "so grave, and gentle, and tender. Some little orphan cousins of mine that were on the foundation still love her like a mother."

While Sally is thus moralizing with her good master and mistress, the young man speeds his way unerringly, though the night is so dark, and the road, which is not a direct one, winds intricately through obscure and muddy lanes. Still it rains, yet on and on the young man goes with ceaseless steps. It is just nine o'clock as he reaches Shirlot, for he peeps through the lodge window, and sees the gardener's cloak, as well as the old man himself seated quietly by the fire smoking his pipe, though the great keys lying on the table hard by bespeak that presently he will be up and abroad to lock the doors and inner gates. So, as there is thus no time to lose, the young man goes forward, passes through

the gates, across the lawn into the left cloister, and so to the foot of the great staircase belonging to this wing. Here all ear and eye, he pauses for some moments, but all being still, and not a glimpse of light to be seen, he steals up the staircase into the gallery. Here he stays and listens again, but not a sound meets his ear, except the heavy patter of the rain upon the casements. Still there is danger that there will be passers to and fro at this hour, and he is cautious accordingly. At this end of the gallery, nearest the stairs, is a large heavy door, always kept locked, and never opened, except on occasions of whitewashing and repairs to the hall, as it leads into that part of it occupied by the matron and the school. At this he eagerly listens, dangerous as is its proximity to the stairhead, but when he hears voices talking within, and is assured by this that the elder children have only now come up to bed, he steals away to a great closet at the other end of the gallery, wherein brooms and other things are stored; and from whence leads a staircase to the roof. Here he remains a long time, wet as he is, though exchanging his shoes for a pair he has with him, which, being made of list, effect a noiseless tread. By-and-bye repairing to the door by the stairhead again, all seems profoundly still. Assured of this, he inserts a key in the lock, and warily turning it, opens the door, for so far as he can just see within the chamber. But to his amazement a dull, half-shadowed light still burns, and whilst all the

occupants of the range of beds are buried evidently in profound sleep, one is still up. She is seated on the floor, with her back to the intruder, and whilst tying some few things up in a handkerchief spread forth on the floor beside her, is evidently weeping bitterly, though suppressing the sobs which accompany such bitter tears. The intruder cannot pass or confront this girl, without as he knows an immediate alarm being raised; so, muttering a ready curse, he pulls to the door cautiously, and turning the key in the lock, beats his retreat back to the end of the gallery. Here he waits a long time, indeed he falls asleep; and when he comes forth again, and recurs to his previous task, it is past midnight, as he knows. The room as he now enters it is profoundly still. By the semi-light which falls—for the rain has ceased, and a dull moon struggles through the clouds—he can just distinguish the tied up bundle at the foot of one of the beds; but as his only object is to pass through the room, he notices nothing more, except to assure himself that all are sleeping. Hence he reaches a wide passage, and crossing to a door opens it with the utmost gentleness. Scarcely is his foot within the room, than some one, disturbed by the noise, slight as it is, turns heavily in bed, and asks, "Who is there?" But the intruder, before the words are ended, has closed the door, and retreated into the shadows of the passage. But those disturbed rise, come to the door, and open it; then thinking apparently that the disturbance had been



an imaginary one, go back into the room, and all is again still.

For a long time the intruder waits and listens. His second attempt to enter the room is quite successful, and his object is soon clear. He has keys, and with these he opens two separate drawers in the *escritoire*, guiding his movements, whilst doing this, by a small shaded lantern he has brought in with him. From the one drawer he takes a considerable sum of money, which was only put there the previous day; from the other such few articles of plate and jewellery as it contains. The thief is securing these, when a noise meets his ear. Not staying to close the drawers, he shades his light, and, stealing into a far corner of the large room, waits to see who it is that comes, for the noise, slight as it is, approaches. The door opens, and to him apparently the same girl, who a few hours previously sat at the bed's foot weeping so bitterly whilst tying up her bundle, steals in and lays a note or small paper on the dressing-table. She then goes to the bed, presses her lips down upon the pillow, stays there an instant, and then glides away, and through the door; and all this so noiselessly as to leave the sleeper undisturbed. Nor does the thief linger—he has got what he has come so far to gain. He follows as noiselessly, and this without a glance within the curtained bed, though the sleeper lying there is his own mother.

Step by step he follows the girl down into the kitchen. She does not stay, but blowing out a

candle that has been burning, unlocks and unbolts the great door out into the left cloister, and is gone. But safe here, he is not in a hurry. He is ravenous for want of food, and he supplies his need. He visits both larder and cellar, takes bread and meat from the one—beer from the other, for he knows Tibb's hiding-place for the cellar-key—and only at length reluctantly withdraws when the belfry clock gives warning that it is time to go, unless he wishes to be discovered.

Along the cloister he steals, and to the small, jutting wing at its extremity. Here two or three rooms facing the outer lawn are protected from it by very high palisadings, which nearly touch the crown of the arch—yet not so much so but that there is egress to anyone light to climb and fearless to jump. The place thus inaccessible from the outer side gives egress from within—as many a time, when a schoolboy, he has successfully essayed. In a moment almost he is free, across the lawn, and climbing the outer gate. But here he is seen, though not recognized. The old gardener is getting up, and, hearing the rattle of the gate, seeks his window.

“Who are you? and what are you doing there?” he bawls. But the intruder is gone, and almost out of sight before he opens his casement; and by the time he hurries downstairs and looks out along the dusky road, not a human being is visible.

The young man hastens on with swift steps. He soon sees before him the girl plodding onwards

with her bundle, but, unwilling to be recognized, and needing rest, he strikes off into some fields where he knows there is a wayside barn, which will afford him shelter and a bed of straw.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A STORY PARTLY TOLD.

ON this same evening that the rain pours down—that Rhoda, so utterly undone, sheds a hundred bitter tears, and prepares to fly from Shirлот ere her disgrace is known—whilst the matron's worthless son draws nearer and nearer the end of his purposed journey to rob his mother of money she will no longer give, Miss Morfe and Lucy Eden sit beside the fire in the old untenanted room already spoken of. For just at this time Mrs. Eden is labouring under one of her insane fits of mingled parsimony, jealousy, and weariness; and her daughter, for all literary purposes, has had to beat a retreat into this room. Here Miss Morfe, having heard from a sympathising neighbour how things are, steps across the lawn to cheer her with loving words, for she fears that the sounds of so wild and wintry a night will depress still more the heart of the young stranger. But she finds her cheerful, the fire bright, and the

pen just laid down. So the one asking, the other obeys; and thus seated hand-in-hand, the wild and wintry night is unregarded, for Lucy reads the story of

#### RUTHVEN'S PLAY.

In an eastern district of the city of London, there lies at the present day a little graveyard, so old, so forgotten, so hidden, and so desolate, as to bear the aspect of wishing to steal away, and be unseen, as well as unremembered, by the living generation. On three sides it is hemmed in by mouldering, peak-roofed houses, that, formed of wood and ancient plaster-work, drop piecemeal on the forgotten graves below, as though to make oblivion more sure. The few tufts of frouzy grass that still remain are never seen, though rank enough to wave mournfully to and fro when the wind is high; and the two remaining elm-trees still show enough vitality to bear a few russet-looking leaves in propitious summers, though not otherwise.

A century or more ago this hidden receptacle of human dust wore a brighter aspect. True, the little church to which it had once belonged was even then a thing of the past; but the graves were newer and more heaped up above the dead; the grass covered each vacant place with fresh greenness; the circling line of elms was full of leaves the summer through; and the open casements, gloried by the sun, showed pleasant rooms;

and at their sills, bright flowers, or brighter faces.

It was the close of a dull afternoon, late in the autumn of the year 1742. It was so far dark that lights already twinkled here and there in the shops and windows; and the wind, sighing heavily in the branches of the elm-trees, gave signs that the coming night would be a wintry one. A girl of about fifteen years of age, and miserably clad, had been sitting for a time upon the graveyard step, but as the wind grew colder she arose and passed on her way.

This street was then—as it is still—densely populated by the lower order of Jews, who perambulate London as venders and buyers of old clothes. On this night it presented a curious scene of mingled squalor and wealth, and this not without tokens of learning, for on many of the ledges of the unglazed windows lay books of various kinds in the Hebrew character. In the centre of the street, at no great distance from the graveyard, stood a brazier, or open cooking-stove, round which was gathered a motley group of Jewish women and their children. Some of the former were cooking fish and other eatables in a huge frying-pan set on the brazier, which, as soon as done, were taken into a sort of kitchen, or rather shop, as it was windowless and open to the street. In this was gathered a large number of persons of all ages and of both sexes. Their occupation, too, was varied. For some sat eating the viands just reeking from the pan, while others discussed the busi-

ness of the day, or compared their bargains; and there were some few who quietly smoked or slept.

The girl who had come slowly onward, now drew near the brazier to warm her hands, for which purpose some of the women kindly made way; whilst one, still more gentle than the rest, placed a seething fish upon a platter, and gave it to her. Whilst she ate this, with some crusts of bread one of the children had fetched her from the kitchen, the girl's gaze fell upon a man who was exhibiting a tarnished lace waistcoat to some of his own calling who sat drinking and smoking round a table. This garment had evidently formed part of that day's merchandize, but being of a better quality than any articles as yet produced from a long black bag stretched on the table, and the fruit of some extraordinary bargain, or rather ignorance or penury on the part of the seller, it formed an object of great professional curiosity. It was turned over and round, and inside and out, and was rubbed and pulled, with the like result of satisfaction, till one of the group, jealous probably of the buyer's luck, pointed out a spot of ink upon one of the flapped pockets. But the possessor was in no wise disconcerted or dissatisfied with his bargain. He merely made a motion of his hand upon the table, indicative of the act of writing, and enriching his professional smile, muttered some words in an undertone, two or three of which were alone audible to those gathered round the brazier. They were heard by the girl, who had been watching the whole scene

with absorbed attention ; and now, setting down the yet untasted food, she made her way through the crowd, and was gone.

With so fleet a step that many of the passers-by turned round to wonder, the girl crossed Bishopsgate-street into London Wall and Fore-street, and from thence into that immortal region of authorcraft, dulness, penury, venality, and bought lies, called Grub-street. Midway in this she turned into a dark entry, from which went a broad, dilapidated staircase. With the intricacies of this she seemed well acquainted ; this was fortunate surely, for its usual decorations of a washing-tub, a stray broom, a pair of pattens, or a dozen tavern pots, were this night enriched by some score of unwashed plates and dishes from the nearest ordinary. Reaching a very wide landing-place, the girl rapped at a thick oaken door placed at the further end. After some minutes' delay, and much talking within, a small shutter in the door was thrust aside, and a wrinkled-faced man with a long nose and a periwig reconnoitered, and then let her in. She ought to have felt much honoured by this admittance to Parnassus, for she stood in no less a place than the literary workshop of The Company of Grub-street Authors. Working together—or separately, as need required—they were ready for any work, however venal or grossly fabulous. They would ring the political changes of Whig, Tory, or Jacobite, within the space of the day's sun ; concoct murders or catastrophes of a grosser



nature, that had no foundation except in their diseased and prurient brains ; spin out doggerel verse by the yard, or slipshod stories of amorous Corydons or Phyllises by the sheet ; or vary their work by sermons that for slavish tenets might vie with those of Sacheverell or Mainwaring.

The room was an unusually large one, and once must have shewn much beauty. Its walls and ceiling of richly-carved oak still remained, though miserably discoloured by neglect and smoke. The upper portion of the mantel-piece had been torn away, and replaced by a rough shelf, now supporting much classic property of authorship—such as wigs, shreds of ruffles, pipes, tobacco-boxes, and a few dog-eared books. In fact, no words can adequately describe the general filth and squalor of the scene ; the more visible that some guttering tallow candles, and a large clear fire, revealed the rusty grate, the heaped-up hearth, and in portions the ink-bespattered floor.

The authors present on this night might be eight or ten in number, though earlier in the day from fifteen to twenty were generally assembled. To add to the felicity of this literary incorporation, it possessed an Eve—but one of such practical, amazonian, unapproachable virtue, that not fifty editors, with fifty flowing pens, not fifty Grub-street journalists, not fifty hirelings of the Ministry or Opposition, decked in the richest suits the gold of baseness could procure, had ever dared to say soft words to the satirical, masculine, sharp-sighted Bevius—Miss Polly Fogg. She

enriched the company with her presence on this occasion, as was usually the case, for she wielded an untiring pen.

The material decorations of the room were in keeping with the literary wares concocted therein. The tables, scattered about, were of all sizes and antiquity; some had wooden legs, some the legs of their pristine youth; some, which had commenced life strutting upon well-turned oak, were taking their last dance upon the staves of a washing-tub. The seats were of all generations, and different aspects and brotherhood. There were old leathern chairs which had borne the weight of Whittingtons; old greasy benches that had stood an age within the smoke of tavern fires; old settles, the backs of which were yet white with the reckonings of unnumbered Falstaffs.

Near the fire, and in a chair of some altitude, sat Mr. Grinder, the directing author of the company. Not to say that he controlled the free thoughts of the assembly; but being the editor of the "Post-Bag" and "Mist's Journal," and known as the intimate friend of Walpole's barber, as well as a ready receiver of the public money when any job of more than usual snugness was in the way, he was regarded as a patriot, as well as a man of mark and likelihood. Opposite to him, on a very high wooden stool, placed in front of an ink-bespattered desk—for she disdained the effeminate luxury of a chair—was perched Miss Polly, at that instant deep in an

article upon the purity of the Press! In years she was fifty or more, and habited in a black serge petticoat—most convenient withal for wiping pens upon; over this was a jerkin, or short bedgown, whose original colour time and dirt had obliterated. And her head, clothed in a mob-cap with deep, funereal frills, was further adorned by a spotted kerchief tied beneath the chin, in the folds of which lay snug those literary instruments through whose medium she taught mankind—namely, pens. The masculine portion of the fraternity sat mostly in the dignity of thought; though a few, whose Parnassus had been fruitful, sat leisurely enjoying pots of ale and pipes of tobacco. As to ink and paper, there was an abundance of their kind—indeed oceans of the former, for the men of Grub-street were fast writers. Yet nevertheless happy, dignified, and honoured was that author whose ink rested in an inkhorn, whose paper was the filched fly-leaf of some black-letter book—for many present dipped their pens into less classic vessels—and wrote on paper supplied for the most part by the candle-shop and cheesemonger.

As soon as the girl was in the room, she cast hurried and anxious looks around. But catching Grinder's quick, rat-like eye, she crossed to where he sat; and considering the purpose of her errand to be its ordinary one, he said nothing; but taking an old greasy copy-book from a tattered heap on his desk, nodded his head as though bidding her to proceed.

"It isn't Nathan who sends me to-night," she said in a very low voice, "I've—"

"What dost thee mean, wench, eh?" interrupted Grinder, angrily, and flapping the ink from his full pen. "Why! is there no money? The ballad hath been hawked in every street; cried up in every coffee-house; got by heart by every citizen."

"It hathn't," replied the girl, as she drew from beneath her tattered kerchief a bundle of broadsides or ballads; "I've hawked it everywhere, but it don't sell. Nathan bids me tell thee he'll print no more, nor buy another ballad, if the same scribbler does it. Tickle's verses'll go off, but none o' th' t'others."

"He hath impudence enough at any rate," said Grinder, angrily; "writers by trade, like ourselves, must know better the political mode of the day than the Houndsditch printer. How can he tell that 1688 is up or down at the Smyrna or Cocoa Tree—or whether the Jacobites have made a step at St. James's. So, if Babble's style doth not do, the Jew shall have no other."

"It hath too much of Parnassus in it," muttered a moody-looking man, whose seat was near Miss Fogg, and whose eye declared much recent vinous inspiration; "what hath more significance, the poet and the ballad-singer have made Cupid their friend without the light of Hymen's torch." This was said with a leer that brought the colour to the girl's childish face, and raised a titter

amongst the least abstracted of the authors.

"But he writeth good poetry," answered the ballad-girl. "Those have listened who have said that it hath the wit of Rochester, and the flow of Herrick's verse, as well as falleth roundly with the music. But where is he?"

"Not here, wench," spoke Grinder. "He hath fallen from us—he is no longer one of our intellectual brotherhood! Hem!"

"But say where he hath gone," spoke the girl with piteous entreaty; "his only waistcoat was in Houndsditch to-night—and he may want a meal."

"No uncommon thing for a poet," replied Bable. "His pride—"

"Hath need to come down," interrupted Grinder. "His terms and our work go divers ways. The Associated Authors of Grub-street are not mercenary—Mr. Tickle hath been an exception."

"Leave off there!" cried Miss Fogg, in an angry and deeply-bass voice; "the subject's dry, the article abstruse, needeth clearness of thought, for it hath for object—Purity of the Press. To work, gentlemen, to work! This literary society *must not* know interruption!" Miss Polly dipped her pen, moved her upraised thumb, as a significant sign to Grinder to dismiss the girl, and went on.

"A few pence, sir," asked the girl in a low voice. "Please let me have a shilling—and I'll bring it again. He hath not a roof perhaps to cover him this night."

"He hath the Fleet," laughed Grinder; "as for money, not twopence—he's not one of us."

The girl cast one look towards Miss Fogg, recollecting for the minute Miss Fogg's sex, and forgetting, probably, that she was a politician, and a Grub-street journalist. For this last reason, doubtless, she looked very stern, shook her head, and waved her hand—for at that instant she had a bright political thought at her pen's end, and could not of course think of less sublunary things. As for Mr. Babble, he was again inciting his coy muse; so that, at last, the only one who had a kind look or kind word was a poor starveling named Chirpster, who did the amorous poetry for the "Post Bag"—though he did not earn his salt thereby—for he slid a penny, his only one, into the girl's hand, whispered that Tickle had been two days in the Fleet, and bid her go.

Once more in the street, the girl's step was as rapid as before. By the time she reached the Barbican, the rain began to fall, and, eddying with the cold and frosty wind, soon drenched her frail and scanty garments. She proffered her ballads, but none would buy; none even condescended to answer her pretty-voiced "Please will you buy?" except by a rude shake of the head, or a coarse leer upon her child-like beauty. She was an outcast, she knew; and yet she did not beg; people had noticed this pride of soul in the Houndsditch ballad-girl before—it was not absent from her to-night, though she needed money, not for herself, but for another. After gazing wist-

fully into several shops where viands were sold, and through the little paned windows of pleasant ruddy-hearthed kitchens and homely parlours, where mistresses prepared nice suppers for apprentices and children, or maids did it for their mistresses, whilst the latter played ombre or piquet, knitted or quilted, or did other old-fashioned work of the day, the girl reached a smithy, sloping downwards towards the street, from the then partially existing "Burkenning," or great watch-tower of the city. The smith's men were yet at work, so that the bellows roared, the hammers rung from bass to silvery treble, the sparks flew here and there, like fire-flies in the ambrosial nights of eastern climes; but the master-smith himself stood talking by the ruddiest fire to a cadaverous-looking, thread-paper-like little man, with a wig in stiff buckle, and a large red nose; yet withal, with such a vast amount of kindly human nature in his homely, wrinkled face as to be in itself a very invitation to poverty and sorrow, just as an open casement, on cold wintry days, invites the wandering robin to warm hearth and scattered crumbs. The girl knew the face, stood for a moment regarding it beneath the pent above the door, then unlatched the half-hatch, closed it, leant up against it, and there, oblivious of the venal doggerel in her hand, sang out an exquisite old air, with words that fitted as the rustle of the leaves, the cadences of summer winds. In a minute the mighty bellows had ended their uproarious "ha! ha!"—in a minute the hammers

rested for a music richer than their own; in a minute the elfin sparks had faded into nothingness!

The first impulse of the jovial master-smith, when, arrested by the loveliest of human voices, he turned and beheld the drenched and shivering singer, was to step forward and lead her into an adjacent kitchen, the door of which stood open; but he was held back by the little thread-paper man, who, with a "Hist! hist! it's Jill," began beating exquisite time with his fore-finger. Thus warned, the master-smith stood and listened with absorbed attention; his men leant on bellows, anvil, or hammer, and listened; and a crowd of little children, with bread-and-butter in their chubby hands, and their mother, with a chubby night-capped baby in her arms, came hastening to the kitchen-door, and listened too. As soon as the song was ended, the little thread-paper man exclaimed—

"Excellent! excellent! Music, Lawes, Anno Domini, 1642; words 1665; author unknown."

"I be'ent learned in them things, Master Bobkin," spoke the smith; "but my ears ha' told it be mighty harmon'ous. Missis" (here he spoke to the matronly mother), "bring her a tidy slice o' biled brisket, and a round off thy new loaf, a horn o' beer, and a silver groat, if thee hast one. The heart shouldn't be hungered or a-cold that hath natur in't such as this."

The mistress, as good and hearty as her husband, laid her peaceful baby in the cradle, and obeyed;



nay, she enriched her obedience by adding to the beef, and ale, and beer a slice of sweet cake or pudding; and further, when she stepped herself with these viands, and saw how poorly clad the stranger was, she returned with a sigh to her kitchen, and there searching for some warm old woollen garment she could spare—being a sort of cloak of duffle, with a hood—she brought it, and with a large old-fashioned corking-pin pinned it on, with a “There, it’ll keep you warm, my wench.”

Whilst the ballad-girl ate her bread and meat, and drank her beer, with a relish that was a proof of hunger, the smith’s men collected a further little sum amongst them, and gave her. They then resumed the work, willing, however, to rest again if another song were likely to be sung. This was probable, for the ballad-girl had a grateful heart; but just as she had finished, and stored the fragments in a pocket at her side, an elderly woman stepped across the sloppy street, from an ancient-looking tavern opposite the smithy, and leaning across the half door, bid the girl follow her, as an ancient gentleman had been listening to her singing from the casement of the great chamber, and wished to hear her sing again.

“What! doth the old gentleman keep your chamber to-day, Mrs. Brownnut?” asked the smith.

“Yes,” was the answer, “he hath been there since noon. He came in his chair, as he always doth. But come, my girl—I was bid to hasten thee.”

With this the girl followed the mistress of the

"Swan," the latter holding up carefully her quilted petticoat, lest it should get wetted in the miry kennels.

"What is it?—who is it?" asked the little man eagerly; for if failing he had, it was that of curiosity.

"Go and set on Margery's settle, and thee'll hear," said the smith; "it's a love-story o' good King William's days, and the room, it be said, be just in the same state it wur then. Go, the little that Margery Brownnut knows she'll tell. She hath not the gift o' silence no more than the rest o' her sex."

Thus incited, the little thread-paper man beat retreat, and opening the door-hatch, hurried across the street.

"Master, who's that little man?" asked the smith's wife, as, renewing the care of her baby, she made its dimples deeper by her silvery kisses.

"Doth thee not know, missis?" smiled the smith. "He gossips here often enough for thee to recollect. It's Johnny Bobkin, the clerk of St. Dunstan's by Temple Bar. A queer 'natomy in his way, but mighty good, though he hath got a plague at home—that be the seven plagues o' Egypt all in one."

"What be those, master?" questioned the curious dame.

"Why, a shrew mistress in Margery Bobkin. But for his music, the poor wretch must ha' bin long ago dust and ashes." The smith shouted this information with a loud and merry voice.

"Ha! I thought he wur a musicianer," added the good dame, "for he beat his fingers up and down just as reg'lar as the girl sung."

"Ah! that he did," said the smith, "for he's a better musicianer than a tailor, which be his trade. What's more, folks say he's old John Stow over again in the way of music; for he collects old ballads and songs, and them sort o' things; and many's the lord and lady's chair that turns into Fleur-de-Luce court on account o' Johnny's queer scraps o' crotchets and quavers."

"Bless me!" The dame would have asked much more, but domestic matters requiring at this moment her attention, she retreated into the kitchen.

Johnny Bobkin followed the girl so quickly as to be in the tavern almost as soon as herself. The door opened at once into the kitchen, a vast cavernous room, disproportionately lofty, so that the huge smoke-dried beams were lost in dim shadows, as well as the bags, ropes of onions, magpie's cage, hams and bacon that hung therefrom. The much-worn brick floor was strewn with sand; the enormous window of little diamond panes was partly shadowed by a strip of green serge; whilst the chimney-place—equally of the Brobdingnag type—had a vast oak settle running from either side, in which were gathered the "Swan's" guests. These in number were not more than seven or eight, and for the better part peaceful citizens, met to enjoy a chat by the brilliant fire, for which the "Swan" was celebrated. Amongst those assembled sat a man

evidently of the better citizen-class, though his features were somewhat homely. He sat quietly smoking and drinking a pint of the "Swan's" best ale, placed on a little table before him; here and there he dropped a word into the conversation, but otherwise his object seemed to be to study men's faces, as well as the matters of still life about him, rather than hearken to opinions. For whenever some countenance more full of character than another was turned aside, up went the thumb-nail of his left hand, and with a pencil in the other, its counter-part in a few seconds, and by a few lines, was sketched there.

Taking up a candle guttering in the draught from the door, Mistress Brownnut led the way up a steep and crooked staircase, to the huge chamber above the kitchen, followed by the ballad-girl, and by Johnny, whose curiosity at this moment was greater than his politeness. Taking him probably for some musician or attendant upon the girl, the landlady made no dissent, but, opening a door, ushered them into the before-mentioned chamber, in which, seated before the fire, was an elderly gentleman, a little bent with years, but of courtly aspect. He was dressed in a sad-coloured suit; but his ruffles and shirt frill of the finest lace, his embroidered waistcoat, his diamond buckles, and jewelled hands, bespoke a man both wealthy and refined. The window was yet open through which he had listened to the girl's voice, and now, seeing her light and girlish figure step within the room, he

bid the landlady close both door and window; then rising and seating himself before an ancient-looking virginal or harpsichord, he ran his fingers across the keys, played a madrigal-like air of exquisite simplicity and beauty, and asked the girl to come near and sing. At first she could not, for the song was unknown to her; but Johnny knew both tune, and words, and dates, and author, and everything about it; so repeating over a time or two the simple verses, and humming the air through in a thin treble voice, the girl caught both with marvellous quickness; then, aided by the accompaniment the gentleman so lightly touched, she sang with even more exquisite effect than in the smithy.

At the gentleman's bidding, she repeated the song several times; and whilst she did so, it was curious to observe his deep and unconcealed emotion; and when at length the faintest echo of the girl's voice had died away, as well as the melody he played, he leant his arms upon the instrument, and burying his face within his ruffled hands, wept in the passion of a softened yet unrestrained grief.

Johnny would most certainly have stepped forward to comfort him, had not Margery Brownnut withheld him, and by a gesture of her finger bid him be still. So thus for some minutes they stood, curious spectators of the scene. There was enough to interest them for a much longer interval. The oak-panelled walls, grey with dust on every ledge, and hung

with cobwebs; the large funereal-looking bed, round which was drawn a mass of moth-eaten, faded curtains, once green, like the youth and beauty they had shadowed in, but now nestling in the draughts that stole from chink and cranny; the toilet, the looking-glass, the articles of wearing apparel yet cast about, the chairs and countless other things—alike the prey of dust and the oblivion of disregarding time.

Recovering himself presently, the old gentleman rose, and taking his seat again by the fire, bid Mrs. Brownnut repair to the kitchen with the stranger; there, at the old gentleman's expense, concoct a bowl of punch, for all and every guest to taste that willed it, whilst he conversed for some minutes alone with the ballad-girl. Bobkin's anxiety thus met with signal disappointment; but once snugly in the settle, with some punch before him, small ills were soon forgotten. This consolation was the more complete, for the reason that, as soon as the punch was ready, Mistress Brownnut took up her knitting, and related with much pathos the story connected with the mysterious chamber. It was simply that some forty years before that time, a young lady, very beautiful, and richly gifted with a sweet voice, riding on a pillion behind a servant from her father's house at Stoke Newington to a rich relation's in Jewin-street, was thrown from the horse, and dreadfully injured. At first she was carried into the ruined Barbican itself, from thence into the

chamber of this very inn, which was got ready as soon as might be for her reception. Here for some weeks she lingered, bearing her large suffering with incredible patience, and unceasingly attended by her sisters and mother, as well as by the gentleman to whom she was shortly to have been married. Music having been always an exquisite delight to her, her harpsichord was brought hither; and on this her sisters or lover used to play as an accompaniment to their voices whilst they sung her favourite airs. One day as she lay listening, as they thought, to the most liked of these, she passed away in her lover's arms—the exact moment they knew not, for when he unwound them she was dead. From the hour that her body was removed to her father's house for burial, the room was shut up, just in the condition it was when she died; a very handsome rent was paid for it; and hither, on the anniversary of her death, as this night was, the gentleman—who never married—came and spent the day within its shadows; at times passing the hours in silence, at others soothing his long-treasured grief by playing over the simple melodies she had loved so well.

Hardly was this true love story at an end, when the ballad-girl came down-stairs, and giving but little information as to what had occurred, beyond the fact that the gentleman had rewarded her with two guineas, she wished all present a civil good-night, and prepared to go.

"Why so fast, and which way art thou going?" questioned Johnny.

The girl replied that she was going to the Fleet Prison, and that as quickly as she could, or it would not be open even to the "late-hour fee."

"The Fleet lieth my way," replied the little thread-paper man; "I'll take care of thee. After that, I'll see if thou can'st not have the dead apprentice's bed—it's empty, and thee wan'st a home."

Saying this, he finished his punch, bid the company good-night, and led the way.

Crossing Smithfield, the Old Bailey, and threading Fleet Lane—no unperilous matter at that hour, namely, eight o'clock—they stayed, at the girl's desire, at a second-hand clothes shop at the extremity, and purchased a waist-coat. Proceeding hence, they came in sight of the turgid, dirty river Fleet, then open, and guarded on either hand by a coarse hand-rail, vastly dilapidated, and affording free ingress to its muddy banks. Proceeding round to the gate of the prison, the girl was admitted, after paying an extortionate bribe; the little man preferring to remain outside rather than spare a sum which Mrs. Bobkin might miss when making her nightly and customary search of his pockets. Just within the gates were several open shops or stalls, whereat prisoners were permitted to purchase provisions and other necessaries. Here the girl supplied herself with a plateful of cold boiled beef, a loaf of bread,



some cheese, and a bottle of Scotch ale; then led by a man bearing a link, and wearing a frowsy nightcap, she crossed yards and threaded passages to what was called the "Common-side," because set apart to the most needy and abject of the debtors. Here the man stopped before a door, on which, amongst other names, was scrawled in chalk, "Erasmus Tickle, Poet;" and pushing it open without apology of any sort or kind, bid the girl be quick, and then retreated. For a minute she could scarcely distinguish an object within the room, or cellar, so dim and feeble was the light of the only candle, stuck in a broken jug, compared with the glare of the link. But seeing better presently, she could distinguish him she sought, sitting talking to an old man, who bore the aspect of half-citizen, half-miser. They were not alone—though their whispered talk must have been inaudible—for in a miserable truckle-bed in a distant corner lay another man, as though asleep.

Tickle was the first to perceive the girl, as she stepped lightly to the rickety table at which he sat—wigless, waistcoatless, coatless, as she had premised, and with his ruffled shirt hanging in dirty tatters round his hands. His spirits were nevertheless gay, as flirting open his tinselled snuff-box, he took a pinch, and then offered the like courtesy to the old man.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "thou art come, art thou, to say that the Associated hath relented—the Journal hath stopped—that Fogg's disconso-

late—Babble utterly at a loss! Well, repentance is better late than never, especially when it hath its sign in ale. Come, let me taste it."

The girl placed the ale and viands on the table, and said gently, "These are not their gifts, Mr. Tickle, but mine. I was there to-night, but—."

"Of course," he interrupted, with satirical bitterness, "to chuckle with Grinder; to—."

"You have least reason to think ill, or believe ill of me, Mr. Tickle," she said, interrupting him, and speaking with a degree of firmness strangely at variance with her childish appearance. "How many times I have saved you, and starved for you, since you picked me out for my looks from amongst Nathan's ballad-singers and hawkers, you best know. I liked you, and therefore sung for you, though there were others, who would have treated me as an honest wench, and paid me better."

"Indeed! It is a pity thee didn't sing their doggerel instead of poetry like mine. But give me the ale."

He did not wait for her to hand it to him, or for means of drawing the cork, but beating off the neck of the bottle by a blow on the table, held it to his mouth, and stayed only when his breath was gone. Then looking across to where the girl stood, he seemed struck anew by the beauty of her face, yet more by its changed expression; and there was something like jealousy expressed in the altered tone of his voice when he abruptly asked where the money had come from wherewith to buy these things?

She wished to tell him—it was one of the motives of her journey hither; but she hesitated to do so in the presence of others, especially of the old man, who watched her with such an expression of cunning eagerness.

The dissolute poet bid her with a laugh go on—that the gentleman was a friend.

Very reluctantly—yet with an innocent simplicity that would have moved the heart of any worthier man, not only to feel pity, but to do justice—she told him of that night's incident in the Barbican, and of the worthier life for her that was likely to be its result.

The poet only laughed significantly, and hinted that the whole story was of Grub-street fabrication.

“It isn't! it isn't!” wept the girl; “Johnny Bobkin, the parish clerk of St. Dunstan's in Fleet Street, can tell thee so, for he is waiting for me outside the prison gates. It isn't a lie, Mr. Tickle, for I'm going to-morrow night to Lincoln's Inn to sing to the gentleman and his sister, and a great singing master, who is to say whether my voice hath merit in it. If it hath, I am to be taught, and in time sing in Mr. Gay's opera, and at Ranelagh.”

She stayed here, for her emotion had made her breathless, and blind to the fact that the men had exchanged many glances; but drawing near to him she loved, to him whose victim she had been, she continued, as though unconscious of any human presence but his—“Then—then—when I can

sing well, and work for you, and bring you luxuries—then—”

He did not let her finish her beseeching words, but burst into a laugh so coarse and loud that it awoke the distant sleeper.

“Ha! ha!” laughed this dissolute discreditor of letters; “what! make a Fleet marriage of it, eh? No, no! the promises of sentimental moments are but fudge. No! no Fleet marriage—not to-night especially, when my fortune’s made, and this Paternoster Row bookseller is here to offer the Lord knows what for my services—”

“I know thou art a gentleman, and I only a poor ballad-singer—a little better taught and cared for than many, because of the kindness of the Jewish priest; still only a poor ballad wench, with nothing to offer thee but my love; yet I would work for thee—honour thee—”

In this depth of her anguish and entreaty, she had lost as it were all perception of others’ presence; and coming nearer and nearer, now knelt, and sought to caress the hand which held the snuff-box, as though, like a beaten dog, it was her duty in her low estate to show herself as one sinning and not sinned against—as, poor hapless one, she was!

There was a pause whilst this Niobe wept, this Mephistopheles exchanged merry winks and nods with the bookseller—and it was curiously filled up by the awakened sleeper, who, now rising up in bed, leant on his elbow, and said,

“The marriage ceremony is a very nice little

easy affair. Mr. Tickle, just try, I want a job ; and it, you know, can end as many have done—in *fumo* to-morrow. So say the word—my register and gown are in the closet ; Mrs. Muggins 'll dry my bands in a trice, and we can borrow a prayer-book next door. Soon done, sir—fees cheap and reasonable.”

This tempting offer of this worthy specimen of the Fleet Prison parsons of the day, was, if heard, at least unrequited ; for, waiting till these pitiful entreaties had reached their climax, till she had crept nearer and nearer, as though to hide her debasement in the shadow of his presence, till her lips were pressed down upon a hand so unworthy of her child-like tenderness, he raised it *then*, and with one cowardly blow half struck her, half pushed her, till she reeled whole paces from his side, and then bid her go, for that he, a gentleman, a university scholar, a poet, should, now that fortune had changed sides, look steps higher than a Houndsditch ballad-girl, and marry some Lady Betty or Belinda with a fortune.

To this no reply was made, nor had the command to be repeated. Rising, as though with difficulty, from her stricken posture, the girl crept, rather than walked, from the room, only turning to look the poet once more in the face as she closed the door. It was one for him to remember. It implied neither hate, nor scorn, nor revenge ; but, as far as might be, their eternal separation from that hour—that henceforth the paths of their lives must be widely asunder ; and that,

crushed, scorned, dishonoured though she was, she would rise superior to her fate, were means afforded.

Nevertheless, as soon as the door was closed, she sunk down in a state of bitter anguish upon the pavement beside it. Here the man with the link found her upon his return, though in a different attitude; for, becoming unwittingly a hearer of the conversation which followed her departure, it soon arrested her earnest attention, and she listened with the deepest interest.

Upon her exit from the prison, finding the worthy parish-clerk patiently awaiting her return, she sought from him some knowledge touching the old bookseller closeted with Mr. Tickle, and learnt that his name was Martin Cratch, by repute a wealthy, miserly man, and living at the sign of the "Old Red Book," in Paternoster Row.

"As it's not yet too late," said honest Johnny, "and I've been needing to go up there these past two days to fetch a coat of his which wants a stitch, we'll go there now, and you can see and judge for yourself, the more that Mistress Beck, his housekeeper, is a good friend of mine."

Saying this, honest Bobkin led the way up Fleet Lane; though, to speak the truth, it was not so much the coat that took him there, as his own willingness to put off his encounter with his worthy wife.

The Paternoster-row of that day was a quaint

place. Vast numbers of sign-boards darkened the way, and creaked in the wind, though the houses, being for the most part inhabited by the worthy shopkeepers themselves, held a more cheerful look than at present. Many of the shops were by this hour closed, but Cratch's was not so; for though the books were cleared off the wide ledge of the unglazed windows, the apprentices were yet busy within the shop. Avoiding this, he led the way down an adjacent passage, and from thence through a wide door into a warm and capacious kitchen. Here the apprentices' supper was laid ready, whilst that of the master was in a state of savoury preparation before the fire—namely, a fine fowl, twisted round and round, and delicate Epping sausages frizzled slowly in a pan.

After a discussion touching Cratch's coat Johnny Bobkin was invited to stay supper, was supplied intermediately with a horn of beer, and Mistress Beck found a seat for the ballad-girl in the chimney-corner.

"Company, eh?" asked Johnny, confidentially, when he and the housekeeper had warmed in their talk, "or only Miss Alice?"

"Alice went at noon to Leicester-Fields, to spend the day with her godfather at the 'Golden Rose.' So supper is for master and Mr. Ruthven."

"Dear me!" replied Bobkin; "what! have matters progressed so fast and so far that——"

"No! no!" replied the housekeeper impa-

tiently, "you can't think that ; the old man knows nothing of it, and well he dothn't. But list ! here he comes !"

Even as she spoke, the same gaunt, old, shadowy man the ballad-girl had seen so lately in the Fleet prison glided in, and without appearing to notice either her or Bobkin, called Mistress Beck aside, and whispered—

"No butter in the gravy, Beck ; a very small loaf, and not too much ale. And hark'e, if I should be under the necessity of having in the Nantes—authors are all toppers—empty the bottle, Beck, leave but a little drop in, scarcely enough. We can say that Alice hath the keys, eh ? eh ? But—but—doth any one wait ?"

"Yes, Sir John Ogilvy's gentleman, Mr. Pounce, stays in the parlour ; so perhaps——"

"No, no, Beck," eagerly interrupted Cratch, who through his furtive glances had become aware of the clerk and ballad-girl's presence, though he did not appear to notice them, "the chicken's solely for myself and the author. Pounce goes directly—I shall let him out by the shop-door, and with my own hand ; he's only come to fetch a little copy of Livy for his honourable master—I shall let him out, Beck, *I* shall."

These latter words were repeated so often, and so emphatically, as to need no profound casuist to perceive that there was a motive for so doing.

Thus saying, Cratch rubbed his hands and glided from the kitchen.



"I *shall* put butter in the gravy," whispered Beck; "ay! and an extra slice. What Alice loves, I love. You understand, John?—"

Which John did.

It was usual, even twenty years later, for booksellers who issued translations, books of divinity, or works of compilation, to have this labour effected under their immediate eye, and usually in rooms contiguous to their shops. Accordingly, such substantial booksellers as Cratch usually possessed considerable collections of books for the use of their needy writers, for there existed as yet no public libraries, and the few private ones were for the most part inaccessible, except to the hireling of a titled man, or the puppet of a party.

Cratch's method of business formed no exception to the custom of the time. His authorcraft assembled early in the morning, and left late at night; their paradise through these hours being a cramped-up room contiguous to the shop. Herein, at various dusty tables, piled up with books, proof sheets, and manuscripts, they passed the day, well lighted by two windows, from one of which, to their vast pleasure, they often caught glimpses of the bookseller's pretty niece, Alice Stow, as she passed to and fro in a little garden, enriched by a tiny grass-plot and one bowery apple-tree.

Owing, probably, to the prospective chicken and the flavoured Nantes, the authors, with the exception of one, had been dismissed at an earlier hour than usual. But they were made no excuse

for a leisure hour for the young man who remained, who went onward with his work—a translation of the Odes of Horace—till Cratch, now gliding into the room, bid him leave off, as the cloth was laid, and supper nearly ready.

“Come, sir, come, sir,” he said, in a voice that, attempting to express cheerfulness, only sounded the more lugubrious for the attempt, “let us adjourn to the parlour and enjoy ourselves. There we shall be undisturbed, and after supper you shall read your Play. I’ll make a bargain, sir, if I can, though the times are bad, and the risk will be great.”

Thus addressed, the author of the play, a handsome, intellectual-looking man, of about five-and-twenty, closed his books, and when Cratch had carefully extinguished the two coarse tallow-candles, followed him from the room. The parlour lay at the other side of the shop; and here they found the cloth laid, a bright fire burning, and a large leather screen that almost always stood on one side of the fireplace, now drawn across the pretty oval window that, looking out into the garden, was a favourite seat of Alice’s. Whilst Cratch crept up and down the room uneasily, peeping here and loitering there, the young man took his seat by the fire, careless and unobservant of Cratch’s eccentricities, so that he were thus left undisturbed to glance round this sacred spot of Alice Stow’s daily life. During the full year he had now worked for Cratch, this was but the second time he had been within the room;

therefore much was new to him. Here stood her embroidery-frame—here her choice pieces of old china—here her pot-pourri jars—here some of her favourite plants, though the best were shut out from view by the screen. At these he could have looked untiringly for hours; but presently Mistress Beck, assisted by one of the apprentices, brought in supper; and the golden visions of bright eyes, small hands, and rounded waist were made blank. Mistress Beck usually presided at the supper-table; but, for reasons of his own, Cratch had desired that on this occasion he and the author might sup alone. Therefore, when the viands were placed, the housekeeper and the apprentice withdrew.

To anyone with a heart bigger than a pin, it was at most times a dreadful thing to see old Cratch carve; but on this night he excelled himself. He cut off such little bits, and helped them so sparingly, and dealt out such modicums of gravy, as would have made a mouse or a sparrow thankful to sup with him. Possibly his opinion might be that authorship and indigestion were synonymous terms, or that the men of books and paper lived upon a spiritual manna unknown to more common mortals.

Be this as it may, his calculation was a wrong one; for, remarking, "You'll take no more, sir, I daresay; fowl is heavy; I'll call Beck—" he was about to summon the housekeeper, when he was stayed by the astonishing, utterly unpardonable words—

"I *will* take more, if you please—a wing, a slice of the breast, a sausage or so, and more gravy; and I'll help myself to potatoes."

From this moment Cratch gave himself up to the utter annihilation of the fowl, the finishing of the sausages, the final disappearance of the potatoes—nay, to an onslaught on the Nantes such as was agonizing to contemplate; nevertheless, he had compensation in view. For if hitherto he had wavered, had hesitated, had weighed consequences, he did so no longer, but went heart and soul into the business proposed to be effected. In this, as in other momentous things of human life, a fraction turned the balance.

The supper removed, the Nantes, hot water, tobacco, and pipes on the table, the manuscript fetched from the writing-room, the door closed, the young man sat down to read the Play on which the bookseller was to pass judgment. It was a five-act comedy, anticipating in its wit and brilliancy the style of Sheridan, and the moral tone of even a later day; for this last reason it had been refused by several managers, who preferred to suit their audiences with coarser fare. But there were those who had read it, who had wept and laughed by turns, and seen in its pages anticipatively the wisdom of a nobler generation. Yet page by page Cratch listened, smoked his pipe, and said nothing; the only emotion visible in his meagre visage was connected with the screen, for there his glances fell often and uneasily.

Flushed by his allotted task, Ruthven was reading a scene in the second act, when the door opened, and a little merry fat man, wearing a wig, a cocked hat, spotless ruffles, and bearing a gold-headed cane, stepped gently into the room, nodded to Cratch, took a seat at the table, nicely sweetened a tolerable modicum of Nantes, filled a pipe, lighted it—and all this without a word, for he listened to the Play. He listened to some purpose; his heart was no nether millstone like that of Cratch, for he said “good” here; laughed “oh! oh!” there; and sighed sighs that were genuine, and nature’s own.

Thus matters would have proceeded to the play’s end, but for Cratch’s raven croak in the middle of a scene that was drawing “oh! oh’s!” from the merry listener, “It won’t do, sir—it won’t do, sir.”

“It *will* do,” spoke the kindly listener; “you have no more humour, Cratch, than a frog or a flounder.”

“I’m the best judge in these matters, Mr. Gillpill,” replied Cratch drily. “The Play’s personal; what’s more, hath political allusions—might bring me into trouble with some honourable gentleman; might—”

A strange look of suddenly-acquired intelligence crossed the author’s face.

“What, Mr. Cratch,” he said, “you have had those with you who dread my satire?—come, tell me.”

“No, no,” eagerly ejaculated the old man, “I

merely made a remark—I'm sorry for it, very. But—but—it won't do—it won't take—it hath no fashion in it. A little about my Lord Fribble, or my Lady Belinda, might do, if spiced with a little scandal over a tea-board; or a reverent allusion to the church; or a fling at a Whig; or a tweek at an Anti-Jacobite, and your fortune's made; but mere things to laugh and cry at won't do—I mustn't run such a risk."

Ruthven rose, smiled, and closed the manuscript. The merry little man rose too, and made a bow worthy of Versailles.

"The comedy is admirable, sir," he said, as he took the author's hand; "and I say it, sir, who have been a friend of Will Congreve's. My name's Tobias Gilpill, a chirurgeon, living in Houndsditch; so take a pipe and Nantes with me any night this week—I shall neither bleed well, nor prescribe well, till the reading of thy comedy hath an end."

Mr. Ruthven promised and prepared to go.

"I've another word to say," quoth the raven, as he drew a small leather money-bag from his pocket; "it is that—that—I'll pay you to-night, as henceforth I shall only want you a few, a very few hours a-day; work is dull, sir—so dull that I must reduce my price. Indeed, get a worthy gentleman to help you to do the worst part; so the hours being few, you can devote the rest to the Muses—ah! ah!"

Mr. Ruthven took up the miser's guinea, without other words than a brief assent and a "good

night." To other men his austerity of character would have showed itself; but this was Alice Stow's uncle—and to live even an hour a-day under the same roof with her was worth its price.

A sly aside with Mistress Beck as he crossed the kitchen—for that was the only outlet when the shop was closed—informed Mr. Ruthven that two of the apprentices had already set forth to Leicester Fields to guard Alice home. He therefore lost no time in making his way thither, as he well knew the perils of the thoroughfares by night—this so swiftly and so anxiously as to be, for once, unheeding of the tide of human life that ebbed and flowed. Of groups of drunken men warm from the carousal of Gin-lane; of rakes of the town; of watchmen with warm red noses; of beagles of the law; of creeping usurers; of dead, that in coarse winding-sheets were borne to the nameless and corrupted grave of pauper burial; of children who had no home; of those who had smiling hearths and household ties—of these he was oblivious, passing them as one in a dream.

Crossing St. Martin's-lane into a part of Leicester Fields—then mere waste, and little frequented—his ear was caught by the sound of altercating voices, and a woman's cry for help. Rushing onward, he soon neared a group of persons, and by the light of lanterns scattered on the ground, and attached to a sedan chair, he beheld Cratch's two apprentices, as well as the chairmen, mixed up in a *melée* with half-a-score liveried servants; whilst Alice Stow was

grossly insulted by the fulsome compliments and ruffianly solicitations of a fashionable rake of the town. Any woman would have been sure of Ruthven's protection under such circumstances; much more the beautiful girl he ardently loved, and who, though secretly, returned his love. Forgetting that he was unarmed, he threw himself at once upon the popinjay, grappled with him, seized him by the throat, held him at his complete mercy; when a thought occurring to him as to who the man was, he snatched a lantern from the chair, and held it to his face. His conjecture was right; it was one of the basest rakes of the town, one of the most worthless and weakest tools of faction — Sir John Ogilvy.

The moment thus gained was taken advantage of by Ruthven's assailant. Drawing his sword, Sir John thrust it into Ruthven's arm, and then shouting to his lacqueys, bid them leave the chairmen and apprentices, and come to his aid. They were obeying, when five or six watchmen, attracted by the noise of the affray, came running from the further side of Leicester Fields. As soon as he was aware of this, the rake shook himself free of his disabled adversary, called to his servants to follow him, and fled in an opposite direction. He was followed both by the chairmen and advancing watchmen, but by diving down a labyrinth of courts that then lay between St. Martin's-lane and Bow-street, and favoured by the darkness of the night, he man-



aged to escape, as did also his servants. On another occasion, this worthless popinjay might have been less careful of effecting this, or would have attempted to compromise the matter by bribing the watchmen; but he had already been warned by several justices as to his future proceedings; and the gravity of this insult upon the niece of one wealthy citizen and the god-daughter of another, would, if he were taken, lead to a heavy fine or lengthened imprisonment. This he knew, and hence he made this desperate and successful attempt to escape.

Forgetful of all else, even his disabled arm, Ruthven, as soon as he saw pursuit was useless, turned his attention to Alice. But she had sustained no other injury than that of being seriously alarmed. Her lover's protection and presence soon dissipated even this; and as the chair had been broken and rendered useless during the affray, she prepared to return homeward on foot, though her dress was not adapted for such an inclement night, or for progress through the miry streets. Ruthven proposed that another chair should be fetched; but Alice declined, secretly preferring her lover's arm and escort to even my Lord Mayor's gilded coach, had it been present. Dismissing, therefore, the chairmen with a gratuity, and followed at a respectable distance by the two apprentices—indeed at the greater distance for the reasons that they suspected this love affair, and were not disinclined to treat themselves with sundry tastes

of beer—Alice and the author progressed towards Paternoster-row. Unconscious of the distance, or the wintry night, they enjoyed this walk as much as if made on a summer's noon, and by some lonely river's brink; the more that Alice imparted to her lover the welcome news of her having broken the matter of her heart's choice to her dear godfather, old Matthew Tendril, the wealthy goldsmith; and that he had not said nay, but rather honoured her for her worthy choice, though bidding her be secret for a time. Under the influence of tidings such as this, what wonder that Ruthven forgot his wound, as well as the injustice of the old bookseller, whose interest, as he knew, he had essentially served; and though occasionally feeling faint and sick as they passed on, he managed to conceal his wound and his growing illness till Alice was fairly safe beneath the Old Red Book; then feeling fainter and fainter, he withdrew to the shadow of a courtway opposite, and there sat down.

Long before Mr. Ruthven had set forth on his walk to Leicester Fields, indeed soon after the supper kindly supplied by the warm-hearted housekeeper, Bobkin, accompanied by the ballad-girl, went home; and this, greatly cheered by his whispered talk with Mistress Beck touching the progress of the love-story, in which, for the reason that Ruthven was his lodger, and that he had known Alice from a little child, he was vastly interested.

Happily for him, he found Mistress Bobkin

asleep by the kitchen-fire, she having dismissed her little drudge of a servant to bed some hour before. As she looked particularly complaisant in her sleep—a good sign, as John well knew—he bid the ballad-girl sit down in a shadow of the room by the fire till he had prepared the way; and then drawing a chair to the scold's side, kissed her lips, and folded her fat hands in his two lean ones. Thus tenderly awakened, she looked somewhat pleased; though she made no attempt to return the salute, as in duty bound to do.

"My dear Margery," quoth John, "I'm glad to find thee napping—a little rest doth thee good."

"Ah! I need rest and need naps, seeing what I have to do, and to be master and missis in one. But I'm pleased to-night, Mr. Bobkin, and that's the truth—you can guess why, of course."

It being for his peace of mind to guess rightly, the little thread-paper man essayed, but in vain; at length he stammered out, "Perhaps, my dear, Wiggins hath called and paid for his plum-coloured coat; or Lady Betty Carew been to look at my collection of Lawes; or Signor Tomolino, of Ranelagh, at my Greene's madrigals; or—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" was the matron's reply; "I wish you'd think less of your old humdrum songs, and more of coats and breeches, I might then ride in my chair, and have a satin sack at twelve-and-six the yard. But you're like no other man, Bobkin. However, as you're too

stupid to guess, I'll tell thee—I've let the first floor."

Johnny feigned great joy at this, and inquired to whom?

"Why, to a great author. I forget what he said—"

"Poetical author, my dear?" suggested the meek sufferer.

"No, not exactly that; but something like it."

"Political, then, sweet Margery? That is to say, a writer for the good of his country. Who can it be? There's the editor of the 'Daily Courant,' the 'Weekly Gazette,' the 'Chronicle,' the ——"

"It's the paper which hath a sale of ten thousand a-week."

"I have it, my love! It's Amhurst, the master of the 'Craftsman.' But my dear—" Here the little man stopped short; he knew that to say what he thought would create a storm—so he shook his head instead.

"Thou may'st shake thy foolish head all thou lik'st," spoke the wrathful matron, drawing her chair a pace or two from that of the good little man; "but he's not only a great gentleman, but a most pleasant one, and not like that fellow on the second floor, who—"

"Who always pays his rent," suggested Bobkin, with a degree of commendable boldness, "who dothn't—"

"Say more than good morning, or ask for what he hath need. But I hate such pride, Mr. Bobkin, and so would you, if you had the spirit of a mouse;

but you have none, and would see me trampled on by the whole world, and never raise your voice. As to this nice gentleman of the 'Craftsman,' la ! how different : he said he would take tea with me sometimes, get me to cook him a kidney, and concoct him some bishop. What's more, he admired this gown, poor shabby thing as it be, though, if I'd a husband who'd work, I might have a better, and actually saluted me when he went away. Ah, Mr. Bobkin, there be those who can see charms in your suffering, uncomplaining wife, though *you* can't."

"This kissing part," quoth John, with much marital dignity, and with a look and tone that betrayed no small degree of jealousy, "had been better left alone, Mrs. Bobkin; as to the other event, I think it's a mere political trap."

"I don't, my dear John," replied Mistress Bobkin, much subdued by the manner in which her worthy little husband had received the account of the salutation, and proceeding to mollify him by certain tender words, when, turning her head, she, to her amazement, perceived the ballad-girl. The tables were therefore turned; her own jealousy was roused, and fancying she had caught the honest little man *in flagrante delicto*, she began with a loud "How doth thee dare!" that must have resounded far and wide through Fleur-de-luce Court.

But innocence is always calm—pure deeds need no concealment; so the good little man received this outburst with much patience, and proceeded,

as soon as he could gain a hearing, to give somewhat a narration of his night's adventure, though a little softened *couleur de rose*, a little garnished by those slender fibs, which heaven in its mercy will surely pardon ! for in this world we have often, for pity's sake, to speak them.

He therefore said nothing of Jill's employment by Nathan the Jew, though much of the general kindness of the Jews to her, and of her partial education through the instrumentality of a noble Jewish priest ; he said nothing touching the Fleet prison, and but little of the visit to Paternoster-row ; but he enlarged mostly upon the girl's interview with the gentleman in the great chamber of the "Swan," and of a probable change in her fortunes, as she was to sing again to him on the morrow night ; and that meanwhile, at his request, he, Johnny Bobkin, had brought her home, feeling sure that "excellent and sweet-tempered Mrs. Bobkin" would afford her a few meals, and let her rest for a night or two in the truckle-bed once occupied by the dead apprentice.

Mollified by this account, and especially by Johnny's admirably-timed appeal to her generosity and sweet temper—of the possession of which she had a supreme idea—Margery offered the girl some supper. This being declined, she led the way to a dark closet opening from the little shop, and showing the girl a low bed, on which was spread a couple of rugs, closed the door, and retreated a few paces. Then returning, she opened the door again, and said,

"I don't let interesting lady folks, you'll understand, nor give victims for nothing: as I shall expect you up and helping my shut pretty early in the morning."

Saying this, and waiting for no reply—for weeks, as John said, "Margery had no business in her soul"—she returned to the kitchen, and from thence led the way to bed.

There was at that day, in Lincoln's Inn, a pile of buildings of very ancient date, built probably for chambers, and let out as such: they had always been well tenanted by wealthy and erudite men, not only by reason of their extreme quietude, but by their proximity to those gardens and that noble terrace formed under the supervision of Lord Bacon. The most desirable of these chambers, on the ground and first floors, had been for years occupied by Mr. Francis Mead, a Benchler of the Inn, and brother of the celebrated Dr. Mead. His household consisted of a clerk, butler, and two women servants; the latter under the governance of Mistress Mary Mead, a maiden sister, living close at hand in Bloomsbury.

This elderly lady, being invited by Mr. Francis to take tea with him on the evening following the occurrence at the "Swan," the servants, at the command of their master, made due preparation, not only for her reception, but that of one or two other guests.

Accordingly, by five o'clock the best room was ready, with its bright fire, its tall silver candlesticks, its tiny tea-board, set amidst delicate con-

fections and enticing cakes; and that nothing might be amiss or needing for his beloved guest, Mr. Francis himself superintended final arrangements. Now he stirred the fire; now he drew the snuggest chair a little closer to the hearth; now he placed the softest footstool a little nearer; now ran to the window to look at the weather; or going forth on the great staircase, listened for his sister's chair; then not finding it, he comforted himself with a pinch of snuff. But at length she came, clad in the quaint garb of the time, and holding a big fan; nevertheless, there was neither age nor quaintness in her generous, kindly heart, for she greeted Mr. Francis as though they were still children, and went hand-in-hand with him into the pleasant room.

When the women-servants had assisted her to take off her cloak and hood, and were retired, the old lady made tea in the minute tea-pot, and she and Mr. Francis chatted whilst it stood nicely drawing on the hob. Her first inquiries were as to his health, after the anniversary of his ever-memorable sorrow; and then she proceeded to tell him how his letter of that morning had consoled her as well as deeply interested her.

"Yes, dear Mary, honoured and beloved sister," said Mr. Francis, bowing down his head, "thou who for forty years hast known and hoarded up the secret of my early and undying love, canst alone tell what my feelings were when in that chamber, by that curtained bed, by that old harpsichord which *her* light fingers had



touched so often and so well, I heard that one old song again, not poorly sung, but by a voice so exquisite, with a depth of feeling so infinite, as to soothe my sorrow whilst it made me weep."

"Be comforted, dear Francis," said the lady, as, going to her brother's side, she lifted up her quaint embroidered apron, and knelt with touching grace, "be sure the heavens have recompence for these great sorrows of our mortal life. We most of us—the good especially—have some dark shadow over us; and sterner are these shadows, more difficult to bear through life, when we have need to hide them in the heart. Be comforted! I have ever loved thee, brother; and it shall be my privilege to soothe thee now, by ministering to thy pity. When doth this poor girl come?"

"This evening; when she shall sing to thee, as I said to thee in my letter."

"And I obeyed thee, by bidding Signor Cares-tini, the stage-singer, as well as Mistress Bligh, who singeth in Mr. Gay's Opera, to take a dish of tea here, as they will presently. Now tell me—Is this child poor?"

"Very, in mere circumstances, though nature in her gifts hath been infinitely lavish. From some points she spoke of in her simple story, I fancy her to be an illegitimate daughter of the great Will Congreve—who died, as thou rememberest, some fourteen years ago—by a young strolling actress he brought with him from Bath. Be this as it may, the mother hid her-

self in Houndsditch, where the child was born; then leaving it to a woman to nurse, she went on her way; and, after some months' time, and the payment of some few shillings for its keep, she was heard of no more. As the child grew in years, her ear for music was noticed—her rich voice betrayed itself. Learning this, the drunken harridan, for profit's sake, let her out to Nathan, the ballad-printer, as a singer of his ditties about the street. As time wore on, and people told him of the folks that ever crowded round this ballad-girl—of casements flung wide, of men who, listening, threw her a penny, 'God-blessed her,' and passed on—he had her somewhat trained by the master who taught the choristers of the Synagogue. One day a noble Jewish priest, hearing her whilst being taught, had her still better instructed, and, in addition, to read and write. This learning, in her poor friendless condition, and with the natural tastes inherent from her cultivated parentage, only increased the dangers that were around her. Made the messenger between the Jewish printer and a tribe of venal authors—base by nature, or through profligate necessity—she became acquainted with one known to thee by name, Erasmus Tickle, the writer of some of our finest political ballads and broadsides, a man of undoubted genius and learning, but otherwise the basest literary hireling on the town. I know no more, though we may guess the rest; but to thy woman's ear she may communicate the grief of

which I only saw the tears. If she doth, or even if she dothn't, for the sake of Him of Nazareth, bend low thine ear, and for thy sex's sake, dear sister—pity!"

She made no answer, but her tears were her promise, wept out in Francis's hands!

These were dried the sooner by the present arrival of the Italian singer, immortalized in the fourth picture of Hogarth's "*Marriage-à-la-Mode*." Borne in a gilded chair, and preceded by two footmen, bearing lighted flambeaux, he took his way up the wide staircase with delicate steps, that implied entire consciousness of his own superlative merits, bowed himself into the room, and to a seat by the old lady's side, and took with mincing fingers a cup of her delicately-compounded tea. Next arrived Mrs. Bligh, vastly frizzled, powdered, and patched, yet nevertheless very pretty—and the little company was complete.

Tea-drinking was in those days a lengthened process, as each took some dozen cups or so; but being at length ended, the lacquey came in to clear away, and to say that the ballad-girl was come. Whereupon Mr. Francis opened his fine harpsichord, and ran his fingers nervously thereon; and the old lady, withdrawing to the kitchen, introduced herself briefly to the young stranger and to Johnny Bobkin, who was with her; saw that they had some slight refreshment, and led the way again to the pleasant room—the little thread-paper man, inclusive, as his judgment

in music was a noted thing to all the professional musicians of the day.

So early had Jill risen that morning, and so effectually helped Mrs. Bobkin's "slut"—a poor homely drudge, worthy of a better mistress—as to please that matron vastly, and led her not only to supply the poor stranger with a tolerable breakfast and means of cleanliness, but, to the utter amazement of the household, to offer one of her ruffled gowns for use that evening. But this would have been decking the lily in the garb of an elephantine poppy, so it was gently declined; for in this poor child of nature there was not only sense of independence but of grace. So, saying that she had some few clothes in Houndsditch, she went thither, to find the aged harriidan who had nursed her dead drunk on a bed in the corner of her hovel, and the few clothes she had left with her, when she last fled from her fury, housed in the nearest pawn-shop. But having means to release them, she did so, carried them back to Fleur-de-luce Court; and there, with the help of Prue, the kindly drudge, washed, ironed, and made all trim. The little gown—a childish, simple thing—bought with a guinea some lady of the Court had given her for singing in St. James's Mall one day, was not only worn because it was her only one, but because of a secret, buried in her childish heart, as many such are buried by too generous woman—the women who, in forgetting self, have, as the world says, sinned!

Thus, in her simple garb, and in her lowliness, she went within the chamber, and sang to the great *maestro* of that day; and he, to the excelling delight of honest Bobkin, pronounced her voice to be a soprano of extraordinary compass and richest quality; and that, with due instruction and care, it would be found capable of marvellous effects. Mrs. Bligh—herself an exquisite singer—repeated the same thing; so that it was then and there arranged that the Houndsditch ballad-girl should take lessons of Signor Carestini in singing, and of Mrs. Bligh on the harpsichord, at Mr. Francis Mead's expense, and begin on the morrow. It was further arranged that she should remain with the Bobkins for a few days, till Mr. and Mistress Mead could talk over and arrange certain plans, with respect to her future home, that were floating in the minds of both. Jill then sang some of those ballads of the day which had drawn such listening crowds about her; and lastly, that exquisite little song, "Oh! rose softly blooming," which she had sung in the chamber of the "Swan," and which again deeply moved the aged gentleman, as well as his pitying sister. Jill and honest Bobkin then retired, the latter to the kitchen, where the servants were preparing supper; the former, led by the aged lady, to Mr. Mead's study.

It was a pleasant, book-lined room, looking out by a deep, bay-window, that was curtainless, on to the noble terrace of the Inn. Taking a

seat by the fire, and making the girl sit down on a stool at her feet, Mistress Mary talked long and earnestly with her; this so pityingly, so tenderly, so womanly, as to open to her all the sorrows of the young creature's life. Her history was no other than what she had told Mr. Francis, though there lay behind, as he had well imagined, larger sorrow. With a guilelessness, a frankness worthy of her genius, and proving, if proof were needed, how little vice, as such, had made an inroad in her genuine nature, she related, with low voice, bent head, nervously clasped hands, all which bore reference to Erasmus Tickle. She said that, being sent to and fro to his lodgings, then in Bow Street, she became acquainted with him. That though years older than herself, his handsome person, his refined manners, his real learning, all of them so superior to what she had hitherto met with, had touched the latent gentility in her own nature, and won her childish regard. Thus won, and, what was more, friendless, save for the drunken harridan, whose only care was for the gains she brought, and thus looking up to him more as a god than a man, she became his victim when little more than twelve years old. From that time till the past few months he had not scorned to take what money—and this was often much—she could earn over and above what she had daily to take Nathan. That in prison and out of prison she had fed him, clothed him, found him in extravagant luxuries, till by de-

grees his baseness was seen by her, his real nature recognized. Still she had been faithful to him, though often tempted by poverty, hunger, and surrounding circumstances. But, she added, it was a life she would fly from if means were given—if by her voice she might earn subsistence without encountering the perils of the streets.

"Which thou shalt, my poor one," wept the aged lady, "for there is nothing but what I and Mr. Francis will do for thee, if thou be but truthful to us, even for the sake of the forty years dead."

"I will, I will, lady," wept the girl; "thou shalt find me dead to sin, though I can never hate where I have loved. I sinned in utter ignorance, or, rather, that one so poor and lowly as myself had no gift too rich to give."

"As many before thee have thought, my poor one, and will think again; it is in the nature of true love to be lavish in its gifts, and base is the nature that can take advantage of such generosity. From this hour let the past be dead to thee; I shall never recur to it, or ever speak of it to living ear. Be good—be to me and Francis as a child, and all good we know of for thee shall be thine. Now go. I will call and speak to Mistress Bobkin to-morrow; and as soon as I can arrange with my housekeeper, thou shalt have a home with me."

Even as she spoke, she pressed her lips down on the girl's forehead, and watched her departure

as a ministering angel one it had raised from the dust!

\* \* \* \* \*

Bang! bang! bang! on the old oaken door, as though the dead were to be aroused. Then the latch is roughly lifted, the door a little opened, and a fiercely-toned voice calls,

"Come, ain't you coming in to-night? It is nine o'clock, and I ain't going to be kept out of bed after my usual time, nor find fire and candle. Come! I shall rake out the fire if you don't."

"Mother, I will come directly. Miss Morfe and I were only busy with some writing."

"Ah! I daresay! There's too much business of that sort for any good. Everybody's laughing about these stories—Miss Simpkins, Mrs. Smith, and Miss Pockle especially. If it brought any money I wouldn't care, but four weeks' board owing for——"

What else this most unhappy of Lady Herbert's gentlewomen mutters is fortunately lost to mortal ears. Without taking the smallest notice of Miss Morfe, Mrs. Eden bangs to the door, and retreats back to her own room, banging the door of that still louder.

"I pity you—I do, indeed, my dear," whispers Miss Morfe, as she presses the hand and kisses the face of her young friend. "But we will be happy in spite of all. Come and take tea with me to-morrow afternoon, and we will finish the story in peace."



"If I possibly can I will, for I post it the day after."

When Miss Morfe is gone Lucy puts out the fire, locks up the room, and repairs to that of her mother. The lamp is blown out, the supper set by, and the old lady is hastening to bed, grumbling out her war of words as she does so.

Of these Lucy takes no heed, and they at length cease; for as with a winter's day the sun may shine out upon the shadows—and tomorrow a little peace may settle on this insanity of disease, and time, and ignorance.

Yet, it is a problem if it will—for these dark days are so many; and thus Shirlot is not an Eden, though it ought to be, even for the sake of the blessed charity which lies upon its thresholds evermore.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MANY THINGS IN ONE.

THOUGH strange rumours are afloat this morning, both in the village of Shirlot and at the Hall, they fail to reach the inmates of the more quiet rooms. Miss Simpkins, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Boston, and a few others, congregate together, shake their heads, whisper mysteriously, and mutter audibly, "Yes, it's just what I thought;" "I always considered Rhoda a very bad, forward girl;" "depend upon it, it's that young Clayton,"—and so on in a like strain throughout the day. Mr. Quatford is closeted for some time with the matron; two policemen are seen looking round the building, and others are making inquiries here and there, and one bright little mob-capped face is missing off the upper form in the great hall—otherwise the quiet hours pass just as usual at Shirlot. Miss Eden is busy in the old still shadowed room; and in the afternoon, having settled her queer old mother quietly at tea, she crosses

the lawn to Miss Morfe's room; where that good gentlewoman, having spared her maid for the day on an errand of duty to a sick relation, has placed tea with her own hand, and now awaits her guest with smiles and loving words.

When the pleasant meal is over, Miss Morfe, who is impatient to hear the conclusion of Lucy's story, draws near her young friend so as to hear distinctly, and thus the reading is recommenced and ended of the story of

#### RUTHVEN'S PLAY.

The fashionable hour for dining, with the "men upon town" of the first half of the eighteenth century, was two o'clock. The dinner was usually taken at a tavern; and as moderation was by no means considered a virtue in those days, few of such as thus dined were left sober by the hour of six. The fashionable gallant of this period was, in his frippery, his effeminacy, his love of finery, an anomaly almost past our modern comprehension. His back was worth more than his body; his breeding and his learning were both had in the academy of compliments. In dressing his only industry was shown—four hours each morning being the time commonly devoted to the toilet. The popinjay's genius was in his suits; his generosity in his tailors' bills. When he was dressed, the business of the day was over—when he was undressed he was invisible. His clothes were all that was ever seen of him; and

when he died, they were his only valuable remains, to be hung up as trophies in Monmouth-street.

About the same time as the ballad-girl and Johnny Bobkin took their way to Lincoln's Inn, there issued from "The Smyrna" one of these noon-day revellers, who, bowing languidly to such friends of the feast as were crowded round the door, glanced at his watch, and entering a chair which waited, bid the men bear him quickly on to Bow-street. This street, then dedicated neither to trade nor justice, was a fashionable quarter of the town. The footmen, the sedan chairs, the hackney coaches, the private chariots, the ceaseless noise of knockers, were some of the signs of its aristocratic character.

The chair of the diner at "The Smyrna" had scarcely entered the street, when it was stopped by a man who had been watching for it for a considerable period under an adjacent doorway.

"The hall is full of duns to-night, Sir John," he whispered, "and there are three servers of writs amongst them—one disguised as an old woman; one as a parson; a third as a quack doctor. There is no getting in the front way; it must be by a window, or the back door—the first best, as there may be some spies about."

Acting upon this information, the young man dismissed the chair, and following his valet, Pounce, down an adjacent court, soon gained private ingress to his dwelling, by means of an obscure window in the rear. Then ascending

a back staircase, he reached a luxurious room, where his valet robed him in a loose gown, drew his settee to the fire, placed his chocolate before him, and handed him a newspaper, about the size of a child's pocket-handkerchief. Disregarding this last, Sir John Ogilvy sipped his chocolate, stretched himself luxuriously on his couch; and then, seeing that Pounce still remained, he somewhat querulously demanded why the duns had not, as usual, been got rid of.

"There hath been no means, Sir John," replied the sinister-looking valet, as he affected, with immense care, to fold his master's bedizened coat; "persuasions and promises have been laughed at. There's the man for the price of the Ranelagh tickets; the sempstress from Fleetstreet about the ruffles; Tow, the wigmaker, for your three last wigs; the chariot-maker, and four tailors; and more saucy than the rest is Tendril, the goldsmith's head-apprentice—he saith his master *must* have his money without delay."

"The dog!" muttered Ogilvy, with vicious bitterness, "shall wait till doomsday; I owe him a grudge that shall be paid. The rest must wait till—"

"Till Sir John's married," suggested the sinister valet. "I've seen Miss Trapple to-day, Sir John, and she's very anxious, very willing, to lay down all her father's money-bags to become 'my lady.'"

"But she's ugly, deformed, and sixty," laughed the rake, as he shrugged up his shoulders. "She may bribe you, Pounce, in the hope of catching your master; but it won't do, not whilst there are ministerial bribes to be had for very little work. So say no more about her, Pounce, unless the necessity be greater."

The valet smiled in his dark, sinister way; but it was not seen, for Sir John took up his paper.

He had not been reading long before Pounce, who had retired, ushered in a visitor, who, by Ogilvy's manner, seemed expected. It was a man rather carelessly than shabbily dressed. His face once handsome and yet intellectual, was haggard and careworn, though his age could not be more than thirty-three. His hair was already partly grey, and the wild fire that at times lighted up his eyes seemed the effect of disease or insanity. It was Nicholas Amhurst, the celebrated political writer of the "Craftsman," the most popular newspaper of that mushroom tribe, which from the days of Anne to the end of the reign of the second George, sprung up and lived their day, according to the success of the party or faction they advocated. Expelled from Oxford, this germ of a Tory University grew suddenly into a revolutionary Whig; this pupil of a reverend doctor became at once a hater of all churchmen; and he who had little morality himself assumed to be a teacher of mankind. From this time—open to any bribe or any bidder—this man of real

talent became, under the leadership, and assisted by the talents of Bolingbroke and Pulteney, the fierce opponent of the Walpole administration—advocating reform, not because it was a principle with those who paid him, or that they had a whit more patriotism than other men. Amhurst had toiled for twenty years with hireling pen, merely to show the town the difference between what *was* and what *might* be done. This effort had not been without its intended effect, in raising the indignation of the people, and controlling the power of the Walpole administration. This very man could write like Miss Fogg upon the “Liberty of the Press,” against “Bribery in forthcoming Elections,” upon the “Representation of a Free People,” and could advocate Triennial Parliaments, though one of his hirers was both a Jacobite and a Tory. Yet the administration was not a tittle more virtuous than the Opposition; the latter was only more fortunate than the former in having cleverer hirelings—of whom Amhurst was one—a crew who did not live merely on the pay of the day, but on the greedy promises of the morrow.

Amhurst was now reaping the fruit of his twenty years' toil—DISAPPOINTMENT. He had been successful in writing down Walpole, but his reward had not come. For though Pulteney was created a marquis, Bolingbroke had left the kingdom, and between them the man who had served their interests was forgotten and starving. Yet in the very abjectness of his misery,

the moral and better nature of the man outshone.

This Sir John Ogilvy, the gay popinjay who now lay stretched so luxuriously on his couch, had become known to the editor of the "Craftsman," through the circumstance of their occasionally meeting at various coffee-houses. The acquaintanceship thus commenced had ripened into intimacy—for the one was a distant relation of Pulteney, the other his workman; and this had brought them together at the office of the minister. On the present occasion this intimacy had an added motive on either side; for the one hoped, through Ogilvy's interest, to get paid the price of his twenty years' service, the other to consummate, by treachery and fraud, his deadly hatred against Ruthven.

"Doth all this bitterness you express, Sir John, arise from the squabble in St. James's Mall three months ago?" asked Amhurst, when they had talked awhile. "Did the mere rescue of the goldsmith's goddaughter cause an aversion such as this? It surely cannot, Sir John. I am accustomed to read men's motives and judge thereon."

The young man coloured, hesitated, and dropped his eyes beneath the other's searching gaze. Indeed, his tremor became so excessive, that he rose and made a vain attempt to hide it.

"Y-e-s—yes," he at length answered. "Most hate between man and man hath its cause in woman."



The editor of the "Craftsman" shook his head. The doubt thus implied roused the other's anger, and he said insolently,

"It is not much I ask. Mr. Amhurst can please himself as to performance."

"Much," reiterated Amhurst, dwelling on the first rather than hearing the latter words—"not much, is it, to draw a man into a frank confession of his opinions, and betray him afterwards? Not much to print that which he hath written in the belief of your confidence, and reward it by a messenger and a warrant? Not much to be a Judas, eh?"

"I had not yet stated particulars," drawled Ogilvy, affecting to treat the point with nonchalance; "I merely state again what I did yesterday. The power of the 'Craftsman' is dead, like the man it opposed. You haven't made the harvest you thought to make; and as Pulteney can do without you, I merely offer the best equivalent. According to thy own showing, thou intendest to turn from the principles and men thou hast upheld for the last twenty years, and oppose the government thou didst build up. To this end thou intendest to start a journal called the 'Scorpion,' if my memory serve; and all I asked thee was to allure this covenanting Scot to write therein, and with his own pen weave a net to catch himself; whilst you, in the meantime safe, would be paid well for the work done. One thing recollect—I saved you from a jail two days ago; and your very readiness to become a fellow-lodger with this

man, was at least a guarantee to me that thou wouldst accept of what I offered. The world wouldn't give Mr. Amhurst credit for such delicate and suddenly-acquired honour. I'm surprised, certainly." Thus saying, Sir John rapped his jewelled snuff-box, and took a leisurely pinch of snuff.

Amhurst's words were slow to come; but when they did they were full of effect.

"If I've been a tool, a hireling, and clay in others' hands, there hath been excuse in my necessity. And if, as thou sayest, my fame is infamous, it hath been so on a broad principle, and not borne reference to men individually. And though an author by profession, I have at least not been the Judas thou sayest; whilst for all my sins I at this hour pay full penalty, by hearkening to what I do." The author of the "Craftsman" hid his blanched face in his hands, whilst through his wasted fingers the hot tears of mental anguish fell like winter's rain.

His own cowardly nature, as well as the purpose of serving his own hate, made Ogilvy attempt to palliate what he had said.

"Come, come, Mr. Amhurst, I've had too much wine, and thou too little; Pounce shall bring some—or will you take chocolate? Come, be friends."

Amhurst looked up, but his manner was changed. "No! no wine—I've enough of madness in my brain as it is. And hark'e, Sir John, from this hour I wash my hands of the

whole matter, as far as regards this Scotchman. For the rest, I shall remain at Bobkin's, for I've left Gray's Inn—and it suits my empty pocket."

"Empty or not, Mr. Amhurst, I shall send a bailiff for the five guineas last lent. With duns swarming around me, it's time to look at home."

"Sir John Ogilvy can do as seemeth best," was the only answer.

Ogilvy was baffled by this coolness, and he again sought to conciliate. "Come, come, Pounce hath brought the wine; and I only joked, Mr. Amhurst, when I spoke about the money; nay, though Pounce must pawn my diamond buckles to-morrow, this purse hath five guineas in it, which—"

"If I took would be blood-money. Let us part, Sir John. I shall find work amongst the booksellers, and you some more willing tool."

"No, no, Mr. Amhurst! Pounce hath uncorked the wine, so let us both drink and be reasonable."

As he said this, Sir John cast himself again upon the couch, for he felt sure that wine would be the sedative and talisman it had ever been; but, to his dismay, when he looked up the writer of the "Craftsman" was gone.

Much to the surprise of his friends, and to the grief of her who held a tenderer interest in his fortunes, Ruthven had not been seen since the night he was last in Paternoster-row. A fortnight had gone by, and countless were the con-

jectures and inquiries respecting his fate—but all was silence and mystery.

In this interval the ballad girl's more kindly fortunes had progressed. For the first five days she remained domiciled with the Bobkins; then when Mistress Mead had managed matters tenderly with her testy, yet withal her kindly old housekeeper, Jill took up her abode in Bloomsbury Square, and went thence daily to her lessons in singing or the harpsichord. For the space of a day or so Betty, the old housekeeper, looked somewhat askance and suspiciously upon the stranger, locked her drawers carefully, and hid the key of the jam closet; but when she found how meekly the young stranger bore herself, how singularly sweet-tempered and quiet she was, and how readily she fell into the habits of her new life, her frosty manner warmed into one of kindness; this the sooner that in years long gone by she had owned a daughter as fair and gentle. True, she knew nothing of Jill's former mode of life, or of the sorrows that had made her old before her time; for Mistress Mead had been reserved herself, and desired her protégée to be the same. Still, in spite of a good deal of primness and enforced subordination in countless minor things, the girl found a comfortable home. She had a small chamber assigned to her at the top of the house; a harpsichord, for her to practise on, was placed in the housekeeper's room, and she took her meals in the kitchen with Betty and the other old servants. In the evening-time,

after tea, she went into the parlour and sang to the old lady, as well as twice or thrice a week to Mr. Francis and other guests; and all were pleased with her abiding humility, and enchanted with her lovely voice. Even a few lessons from her fine master, Carestini, effected wonders, and he noised her fame abroad. To this end also Johnny Bobkin helped. With Mistress Mead's and Mr. Francis's permission, the little thread-paper man escorted her each Sunday to St. Dunstan's church, where she sang and drew listening crowds.

Finding his lodgings both comfortable and economical (for like most scolds Mistress Bobkin prided herself upon the super-cleanliness of her house), the editor of the defunct "Craftsman" remained there, as he had said he should. As, in those less refined days, pride and a room up the first pair of stairs were not necessarily relative, Amhurst took occasional cups of tea with Mrs. Bobkin; and, better still, smoked sundry pipes of an evening with her worthy little spouse. Bless me, how they talked of every topic of the time! and, reverting often to more domestic ones, Ruthven's unaccountable disappearance first excited surprise, next wonder, and lastly, as day by day went by, infinite concern. Though the Scotchman was personally unknown to him, Amhurst felt an immense and increasing interest in his fate, for the reason that he suspected foul play on the part of Ogilvy and his ally, Pounce, the valet. Indeed, had his knowledge of Ogilvy's

baseness and moral hate of Ruthven not existed, he must have felt interest in the fate of this stranger, for he was a man of known ability, a fine scholar, and, what was more in that age, of good repute. He did not bilk his tailor, or his landlady, borrow money, or abase himself in the dust for the ephemeral favour of some venal patron, or more venal placeman. What he had eaten and drunk he had worked for; and even mercenary Margery Bobkin related little traits of generosity and self-dependence and industry, infinitely to the young Scotchman's honour. Information such as this was summed up to the very highest point of interest and manly pity, when the little man imparted to his lodger—in such parenthetic intervals as were now and then afforded by Margery's absence whilst scolding the poor drudge, or other analogous duties—Alice Stow's love of Ruthven, and the mental agony his disappearance occasioned her.

Though resolving if possible to ascertain Ruthven's fate, Amhurst was at first at a loss how to act. He had never been an associate of the Grub Street *littérateurs*, and knew but little of the Paternoster-row booksellers; his work had lain in another direction. At that day, too, there was no police, with the exception of a few constables and night-watchmen, to whom to apply in cases of the kind; so, therefore, unless a heavy reward was offered, or a clue obtained by some lucky chapter of accidents, there was little chance of tracing the absent or missing. At length it oc-

curred to Amhurst to seek the ballad-girl, which he did one day at Mrs. Bligh's; and, whilst awaiting her lesson, he heard sufficient to assure him that it was in the direction of Grub Street that Ruthven must be sought, and that, as he had suspected, Ogilvy and his sinister valet were in some way implicated in his disappearance. Amongst other things, Jill told him of Pounce being hid behind the screen the night she and Bobkin went to Cratch's house; and that only so lately as the previous day, whilst returning from Finsbury Fields—whither she had been to sing to some friends of Mr. Francis Mead's—she had seen the same man disappear through the doorway of a wretched old house, in whose upper chambers Miss Fogg and her bedridden mother dwelt, at such hours as the former condescended to dismount from her Pegasus in Grub Street.

Gaining Mistress Mead's kindly consent to the girl's temporary absence, Amhurst, accompanied by her and worthy Bobkin, proceeded to this place the same evening. It was easily found, and, knowing its ins and outs from having been there repeatedly, Jill unlatched the street-door quietly, and led the way up a dark dilapidated staircase to the upper floor. Here, through an open doorway, a light shone, and voices were distinctly audible. They stayed to listen, and from what was said it appeared that Miss Fogg expected visitors, for the politician of the "Post Bag" was there in person.

"Mother," she shouted in a stentorian voice,

for the old woman was very deaf, and her daughter not very gentle in her filial duty, "you must keep your head under the bed-clothes whilst the folks coming are here. Your cap and kerchief are as black as the chimney—but I am not going to let you have clean ones, for I hate the wash-tub, the pen is my implement."

The old lady, who had extraordinary notions of her daughter's genius, expounded the matter in her usual way; for she heard just enough to understand that visitors were expected:

"Ah, ah! Polly's a great genius. I knew it from her birth. Yes, Grinder knows it; he knows he's mere milk-and-water to Polly. So folks are coming at last to say that the nation means to reward her; that the prime minister has sent her a purse; that——"

"Nonsense! Do you hear what I say?"

"Ay, ay! I knew it was politics. I knew the prime minister could not help himself; that——"

As reason and commands were alike useless with the idiotic old woman, her amiable daughter resorted to more stringent measures; she shook her fist at her, threw a large old rug over her and the bed, and then drew the scanty serge curtain to its utmost limit, so as to shut out the occupant of the bed from being seen. Then she repaired to the fire, and sat down as though to await her visitors. Once at rest, her manner and look changed; she was no longer the fierce Pythoness of a venal and degraded literature, but a woman, moved at the moment by mingled



hatred, tenderness, and despair. She had not sat long before those who patiently waited in the shadow of the adjacent gallery could hear ascending footsteps, and presently two men, who were to be recognized as Pounce and Tickle, came up and passed into the room, closing the door behind them, though to little purpose as far as privacy of speech was concerned; for their voices, as well as that of Miss Fogg, were distinctly audible. Even in that momentary glimpse it was plain to see that Mr. Tickle's fortunes had indeed mended; his wig was elaborate, his sword new, and his coat resplendent in lace and purple dye. But if his shabbiness was now of the past, the result of his debauched and selfish life was still more visible. He had been evidently living gaily since his exit from the Fleet, and, judging from the tone of his voice, he addressed the illustrious female politician not only with impudent familiarity, but with a contempt he took no pains to conceal.

The business of the valet seemed to be to fetch a parcel, for which a reward had been offered by the head of the associated Grub-street authors; and, as the breathless listeners soon made out, its contents were no less than Ruthven's Play. Pounce heaped question upon question touching it.

"You see," said Miss Fogg, "I was right; it wasn't till the hook was well baited that the fish was caught. The extra reward offered in yesterday's 'Post Bag' and 'Mist's Journal,' brought an

old fellow this morning to our rooms, where, after a vast lot of haggling between him and Grinder, the trash was produced and paid for. It appears the old fellow's son picked it up in a court in Paternoster-row, on the night the——"

Here the politician dropped her voice, so that the rest was inaudible.

"And *he*?" asked Tickle. "Hath the bell of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, tolled yet?"

What the exact answer was, those so breathlessly listening could not hear; but it probably negatived the suggestion of "bell tolling" by Tickle's laconic reply, "to write more trash, then."

After some further talk, Miss Fogg asked Pounce, abruptly, what made Sir John so anxious to possess the Play.

"Why, he's fool enough to think it lampoons some doings of his whilst Mr. Ruthven and he were at college together in Aberdeen; and he fancies, if it comes before the town, the wits will hunt him into a corner. That's the chief point; and there's some little matter besides, in which Cupid hath a share."

"Not touching Margery Trapple, the dealer in old china, of Marylebone-lane, eh?" laughed Tickle. "Mist had it yesterday that Sir John Ogilvy is about to lead to the hymeneal altar the rich Margery Trapple, with a fortune of £60,000."

"Ah, ah!" chuckled Pounce, "the toothless old jade paid Mist to put that in; but it's only

in part the truth. Margery wants dreadfully to be called Lady, and possess the handsomest man in Bow-street or Soho for her husband. But it's a hard matter to persuade Sir John, though—though——”

“Though his valet hath some interest in doing so,” said Tickle.

The valet winced under this sarcasm, and made no reply.

Not appearing to heed his sullenness, Tickle, with ill-disguised curiosity, asked how Ogilvy had made her acquaintance.

“Why, as her debtor,” mumbled Pounce. “Margery, like other usurers, hath no objection to make cent. per cent. of her money. But I didn't come here to be drawn like a parish-well, but to fetch the Play, to pay what Miss Fogg needeth, and to ask how matters progress.”

“To which you might just add, Mr. Pounce, how best your master's agents—myself amongst the number—can entrap Ruthven into a libel against the State, so as to meet due reward at Tyburn!”

At this crisis, and probably to ward off a quarrel between these men—for as a general rule she was a niggard in giving—Miss Fogg suggested a taste of “strong waters;” and, neither of her visitors dissenting, she opened the door into the dim old gallery, and adjourning to a certain closet therein, brought forth the favourite compound. Then, returning without fully closing the door, she set down the bottle on the table, and

began a search for glasses. She was doing this when Tickle, who had ceased conversing with the valet, said abruptly, "I've some news for you, old girl."

Miss Fogg, still continuing her search, made no answer.

"Why, your little rival, Jill," he continued, "hath met with fairy Fortune. The brother and sister of the great Dr. Mead have taken a fancy to her prettiness and lovely voice; and have hired Carestini, the Italian, and Madam Bligh, to give her lessons in singing and the harpsichord. Mighty progress thereby she makes, it's said; so that she'll sing at Ranelagh and in the play-houses before long. You'll like this, Polly, won'tst thou? Thou likest the wench so; and not the less that, as fortune shineth, she groweth marvellously handsome."

Saying this, Mr. Tickle rubbed his hands, and took a pinch of snuff.

Not even to these words, much as they implied of contempt, satire, and a coarse familiarity—unsuspected in the Parnassus of Grub-street—did Miss Fogg deign a reply, though her face was blanched, and full of evil passions, when she brought the glasses to the table. Amongst these passions were to be suspected jealousy and hate, and a still more deadly despair, as she cast her eyes upon the handsome profligate before her, and remembered she was old and ugly, and no Minerva of the press, at least to him; but rather a woman whose very pretence to be masculine and

unsexed only made her worthlessness and hypocrisy the greater. But to this matter those without paid no attention. Amhurst only listened from the shadowy recess where he and Bobkin stood, to catch, if possible, some word that might afford a clue to where Ruthven was; and Jill, as Miss Fogg had retreated with the "strong waters," had followed in her footsteps, almost as far as the chamber-door, which being, as we have said, left ajar, she could see within. She could see the old deaf mother peering from the bed-clothes; Miss Fogg making search for the glasses; Tickle balancing himself in his chair, taking snuff, and treating this Briareus of the press to that which must be gall or wormwood even to a woman who had so unsexed herself; and she could see the base lacquey retying the parcel which held the fruit of a purer genius than had yet graced the age; for he had had injunctions from his master not to remunerate Miss Fogg, or proceed to add the extra guinea to the reward which had already been intrusted to Grinder, till he was sure the Play was genuine and safe.

At this moment, without injunction from any one, save from the promptings of her genuine heart, the ballad-girl glided noiselessly in, took up the parcel from beside the unobservant lacquey's elbow, and glided back again, unseen by all but the old woman, peering from the bed. But she raised screams loud enough, and informing enough. In a moment Miss Fogg and Pounce were out with the guttering candle upon

the landing; but quicker than the noble prompting thought which had thus saved the Play, the girl was down the staircase, and was gone!

Above the din they made in their brief pursuit down the staircase, and the old woman's continuous screams, "It's Jill! it's Jill!" could be heard Tickle's uproarious mirth. He enjoyed, as it would seem, the matter vastly, and without troubling himself to even rise, leant back and laughed, till he could laugh no more.

Retracing their steps, and vowing vengeance of the direst kind, Miss Fogg and Pounce came back to the landing, and catching a partial glimpse of Amhurst and the worthy old clerk, and magnifying their presence, as Falstaff did the number of his enemies, acted without further thought, upon the principle that discretion is the better part of valour; for the valet, without recollecting that he had left money on the table, but had got no equivalent, took to his heels down the staircase; and the Minerva, retreating within her castle, slammed the door to, and made it fast against intruders.

As nothing further could be gained, Amhurst and the clerk left the house, Tickle's laughter still echoing merrily as they closed the door into the street. In reality there was but little mystery as to what had befallen Ruthven. He had been wounded, as we have seen, and more seriously than he had at first suspected. He had borne up with manly fortitude, whilst she whom he loved was by his side; but Alice once safe,

the feeling of increasing illness became paramount. He dragged his footsteps to the step of a courtway opposite Cratch's sign, and there, almost before he could take his seat, or gain the support of the side-wall, he fell back in a deadly swoon. From this he was slowly recovering, when Pounce, who had dodged his footsteps to and fro to Paternoster-row, got a bully of a linkman he had enlisted for the service, as he came along, to fell him by a dastard blow, that made oblivion more dire and lasting in its consequences. Then calling a chair, Pounce had Ruthven placed within it, and conveyed to the security of Grub Street. Grinder he already knew, as also that for any prospect of reward, however venal or corrupt, he would allow Ruthven to be housed, to live to tell his tale, or, more likely, through neglect to die, and leave no record of his fate. One thing alone fell contrary to the valet's service to his master: Ruthven had probably dropped the Play as he went along; or when he first swooned, as it could be nowhere found, as soon as deathlike insensibility consequent on the blow permitted search to be made. Money was then left with Grinder, and advertisements inserted in the various ephemeral journals of the day; though it was not till it had been added to by the guinea the valet had brought that night, and by the insertion of a fresh-worded and more stringent advertisement from Miss Fogg's classic pen, that the

missing manuscript was forthcoming. Of this Ogilvy had been informed that day by messenger; and hither his valet Pounce had come, accompanied by Sir John's new ally, Erasmus Tickle, to receive the Play, and to sound Miss Fogg as to the amount of trust to be placed in Grinder.

This latter personage, who was nominally at the head of the Grub Street incorporation—if such an assemblage of squabbling, self-opinionated, peculant authors could be said to have a head at all—rented the entire house in which his *littérateurs* met. Some three or four had rooms therein; the rest of the domicile, with the exception of what was styled the “workshop,” already described, was reserved to the sole use of Mr. Grinder, and his uncommonly fat and dirty housekeeper, Mrs. Pugg. In his parlour, the master of this classic host enjoyed the *otium cum dignitate* with vast relish. In his bed-room he slept in a huge curtained bed; whilst the kitchen—a mighty cavern—was consigned to the sole use of Mistress Pugg, who made of it dormitory and parlour. At the rear of this kitchen, and extending far into a dreary yard, full of the desolate debris of a filthy, neglected household, rose a dilapidated room, so hidden as to be even unsuspected by most of those coming to and fro. To this place Ruthven had been consigned, attended only at such rare intervals as Mistress Pugg had to spare from her numerous duties



of sleeping, eating, and tasting "strong waters." A shadowy apothecary, living at hand, crept in now and then, but rather for form's sake than for any duty connected with his healing art; indeed, had Ogilvy's wishes—expressed through Pounce—been strictly followed, Ruthven had died of his wound and its attendant fever before his first week's incarceration was at an end. But Grinder was far too politic to let matters proceed to this extremity; hence the presence of the shadowy apothecary, and the use of just so much of his skill as kept body and soul together; indeed, on days when debility and fever gave less alarming signs, a little of that putting-back system, so well known to modern schoolmasters, mistresses, music-teachers—in indeed to the larger portion of that fraternity whose duty it is to teach human ideas how to shoot—was put into requisition. On the other hand, the light of life was not allowed to grow so dim as to be beyond the point of recall.

In order to ascertain, as far as possible, how matters exactly stood, Mr. Grinder, on the day after Ruthven's admission to the rearward mysteries of Mrs. Pugg's paradise, bid that syren wash out his best shirt; and putting on a purple coat, and well-buckled wig, took his way to one or two of the fashionable coffee-houses of the day. Here, moreover, being ready-tongued, he soon learnt sufficient to induce him to follow the before-mentioned line of conduct; or, indeed, if it were to have bias on either side, to lean to that

of Ruthven's recovery; hence the Esculapian aid, and the elaboration of divers messes of broth and gruel on Mrs. Pugg's fire.

Grinder learnt that Ogilvy, an acreless Scotch baronet, had been a student at Aberdeen at the same time as Ruthven; the latter, likewise poor, had borne an admirable moral character, and won by his eminent abilities and diligence the highest honours the University could bestow. Ogilvy, dissolute and penniless, yet wishing to propitiate a wealthy uncle, by securing to himself the honours of a Latin thesis, to be competed for by the students of the University, surreptitiously copied that of a poor youth who had spent days and nights in its elaboration. Reading his copy of the thesis first, he obtained the prize, though the incredible fraud was soon discovered, and placed before the proper authorities. As a matter of course, Ogilvy was ignominiously expelled, but not before he had learnt the author of his exposé. It was Ruthven. From that time Ogilvy's hate grew. Learning that the former had gone, soon after this exposé, to London, he had followed him thither. At first he could not trace him, though sought for in booksellers' shops, in managers' rooms, in truculent dedications of books to men in power. At length one day in St. James's Mall, Ruthven came between him and Alice Stow as a rival, and her rescuer from insult. Her beauty was a famed thing, and for weeks Ogilvy had followed her with untiring perseverance. For

this latter cause his hate had no further bounds.

Safe in the street, and possessor of the manuscript, the ballad-girl hurried onwards towards Pater-noster-row. She was aware of Alice Stow's love for Ruthven, and of her exceeding grief at his disappearance; and therefore her mission thither was for two purposes—to deposit the precious manuscript with the one that would be most tender of its safety, and to stay tears that were being uselessly shed. True, she would give no exact information as to where Ruthven lay so sorely ill, as he might be presumed to be from Mr. Tickle's inquiries; but he appeared to be at least yet alive, and this would afford some degree of consolation. The ballad-girl further suspected that he lay concealed somewhere in Grinder's house; and the idea of the hidden room at its rear occurring to her, she determined to seek Mr. Chirpster on the morrow, and enlist his sympathetic services, which she knew an amount sufficient to purchase a dinner at the next ordinary would easily do.

Tapping at the kitchen-door already spoken of, it was opened by Mistress Beck, who fancying for the first moment that the girl had come to sing, and thus earn a supper, or otherwise on some little errand for Bobkin, spoke and looked in a degree crossly, for one whose nature was so genuine; but as soon as Jill had whispered Ruthven's name, and asked with much humility to speak to Alice, the shadow on her face passed away, and she bid the girl step in.

"Thou mayn't go upstairs just this instant," she said in an undertone, "for the old man's with her, persuading her to have a doctor, though if she do there'll be fuss enough when the bill comes in. For though Mr. Gilpill is one of the very nicest little gentlemen as ever drew a tooth or gave a powder, and the dear child is right ill, because of taking on about Ruthven, thou, my lass, be much the likeliest doctor."

In a few minutes old Cratch's shoes could be heard creaking down the staircase; in another he made his appearance. In the brief interval, Mistress Beck took the precaution to hide the ballad-girl in the neighbouring pantry, as her presence might have raised divers suspicions in the old man's mind. So considering the coast clear, he spoke unreservedly.

"The poor child looks ill, Beck—very. A little nervous, and out of sorts; and I've been saying I'll send for old Tobias—though his charges," and here Cratch made an immense face—"are tremendous! But the child won't hear of it; so ——" He made a pause here; and in the balance thus sought between parsimony and duty, Alice's negative prevailed.

"Oh! she doesn't want Gilpill nor his physic," said Beck; "I know something that'll bring her round; and if I add to it a little gruel, and tender nursing, she'll soon be well."

"I think so," smiled old Cratch at this non-prospect of a summons for Gilpill; "but I would say that the gruel should be plain—no

butter—no wine—no nutmeg; such things cause fever.”

“Perhaps so,” replied Beck, drily; “though I know thou likest them added to thy own gruel, Mr. Cratch. But leave me to concoct my kitchen physic in the way Alice loves. Thou hast supped, and Dick the apprentice hath carried thy pipe into the parlour.”

Cratch obeyed this broad hint to retire, though a little sullenly, muttering to himself as he shut the parlour door, “that Beck had not only grown saucy and extravagant, but was encouraged by Alice.”

As soon as he had thus disappeared, the housekeeper, accompanied by Jill, passed up a back staircase to Alice's chamber. It was charmingly decked, according to the taste of the period, with oval mirrors, small oil paintings, grotesque china, and shells; but the richest treasure it possessed—its girlish mistress—looked really ill. She sat crouching to the fire in an easy chair—a perfect picture, in her short overgown of scarlet, and toy-like cap of costly Flanders' lace crowning her radiant hair; but, apathetic from grief, she neither turned nor spoke as Beck came in. But as soon as that good soul had knelt beside her, had bent the young girl's head tenderly towards her motherly heart—had momentarily hushed her there—had whispered her lover's name—had said the kindly ballad-girl, of whose voice and noble change of fortune there was so much talk, was come, and at that moment in the room

with her, to give her tidings of Ruthven—this apathy of grief and long suspense was changed into the greatest excitement. Pushing Beck aside, she rose, as if to meet the ballad-girl, who still lingered by the door, as though diffident of venturing further.

“Come here—come closer—come, sit at my feet, and tell me about Mr. Ruthven.” She tottered as she spoke, for she was debilitated and ill; at which Beck, with the tenderness of a nurse, wound her arms about her, and placed her back again in her chair.

Jill, thus spoken to, came forward, but not nearer than the counter-side of the little ebony table, which stood near the sick girl's chair.

“I would rather stand here, madam,” she said; and then, in a low voice, she proceeded to tell what little had been discovered with respect to Ruthven, and what earnest friends were anxious for his fate.

But interpreting this to be worse than what was said, thinking that these scanty tidings of his illness were but to prepare her for the reality of his death, Alice's grief became intensified into wild despair; and her sobs and exclamations, as she wrung her hands and struggled against the restraining grasp of excellent-hearted Beck, must have been heard by the passers-by in the Row.

“Thou mustn't—thou mustn't take on thus, dear heart,” soothed Beck; “Jill hath told thee the worst, and thou wilt soon have better tidings.”

"No, no," sobbed Alice, "not in this world. The world hath not another Mr. Ruthven. Don't restrain me, Beck. I must be dressed—I must go to my godfather; he hath been already sorely uneasy, and he will know what is best to do."

"Thou cannot go, child," replied Beck, firmly; "thou art far too ill."

Thus finding tears and entreaties unavailing, Alice, like an impatient child, renewed her sobs.

"Hush!—hush!" said Beck. "How foolish thou art! A few more cries, and thy old uncle will find all out; and pretty war, as thou knowest, there'll be between him and Master Tendril. Hush! if thou lovest thy lover, be still."

These words were in a degree effectual; and presently more so, when Cratch's thin voice was heard calling out from the bottom of the staircase,

"What's the matter, Beck—is my niece worse? Shall I come up and assist?—or—or—or—shall I—shall I send for Gilpill?" Here Cratch audibly groaned.

"No! no! master," cried Beck, for Cratch's shoes began to creak up the staircase, "the child hath only got a trying spasm, which the nice medicine I'm giving her will cure. So I can't have a man here—thou must go back to thy parlour, Mr. Cratch, and shut the door." Thus admonished, the shoes creaked down again.

For some minutes Alice sat with her face buried in her hands; then looking up, she gently asked

the ballad-girl to come and sit on a stool at her feet.

"I would rather not, madam," replied Jill, in a voice expressive of deep humility. "There is a difference between us, which I can comprehend, rather than thou. But I will come near thee for a minute, for I have that to give thee which thou wilt prize." So saying, she brought forth the Play from beneath the little cloak she wore, saying, as she did so, how she had preserved it.

"I know not how I shall reward thee, Jill," said Alice, again bursting into tears; but this time they rained gently down.

"By kind thoughts of me, madam. I have heard much from Johnny Bobkin of thee, and I covet thy good opinion."

"Thou shalt have it, child, and my regard too, but not unless thou sittest here at my feet. But stay a minute, let me look at what thou hast brought, and at *his* handwriting; and tell me again all thou knowest about it, for I knew that Mr. Ruthven had writ a Play, but he was too modest to say much touching it."

"Well, he read it to thy uncle, as I told thee at the time," said Beck; "and a pretty groaning he made over it, as he always doth when his purse is in the way. But just on the other hand, Mr. Tobias, who was a listener, said it had the real smack of Congreve in it, with something that went beyond; it was fit, he said, for woman's ears—that's much for him to say; for thou



knowest how modest that little man of pills and potions would have womankind."

Drinking in this praise with greedy ears, Alice tremblingly undid the coarse brown-paper wrapper, looked with choked sobs at the handwriting, and buried her face within the rustling leaves.

"Thou must take care of it, madam," said Jill, "there are those hungry for its possession, as thou must understand . . ." and she proceeded to tell her all she knew—a little softening her uncle's undoubted share in the plots against it.

But Alice seemed to take intuitively this last point at its full account, though she said but little. She then assured the ballad-girl that she would take the greatest care of the Play, and keep it locked up, saving whilst she read it. She then recurred to the subject of finding where Mr. Ruthven lay, at the mercy of his enemies.

Amongst other plans suggested, was that of asking Mr. Gilpill's advice, not only for the reason that he had known Alice from her babyhood, but by his possible acquaintance with one or more of the apothecaries practising in the classic region of Grub-street. This last was a bright idea; for, as Jill said, the doctor had a small boy, who, though vastly given to putting his finger into the syrup jar, and to getting his ear pinched for the sin, was yet well known for his acuteness in finding out other persons' secrets.

Such being the case, Beck promised to let Alice go in her chair to Houndsditch on the following evening, provided she were better. Then when Jill had again said she would, if possible, enlist the services of Mr. Chirpster, she prepared to take leave, bearing with her a note of a few lines from Alice for Matthew Tendril, which she would deliver on her way to Carestini's in the morning.

"Thou must come again to me, dear child," said Alice, as she bent her face upon the shoulder of the ballad-girl, "thou and I must, from this time forth, be certain friends. Now, as thou wilt not take money for thy beautiful service in saving Mr. Ruthven's Play, say what I may give thee as a token of my own remembrance—as a sign of the faith between us."

"A ribbon that thou hast last worn, madam, I should like—nothing greater."

"Nay, something a little worthier. Beck, give me my godfather's last gift." The kindly house-keeper obeyed, and brought a rich inlaid box, well filled with costly jewellery. From this Alice selected a little ring, in which was set her hair, and gave it to the girl.

"I thank thee, madam ; I will ever keep it—though I will put off its first wearing till the night I sing in Mr. Gay's Opera, which it is said I am to do."

"Art thou ? then I will indeed be there. Now get tidings of Mr. Ruthven, if thou canst, for thou

knowest my heavy heart ; and come to me again, I pray thee."

The ballad-girl, kneeling on the footstool, promised so to do. Then she and Alice parted.

In the passage beside the kitchen-door Jill found good Johnny Bobkin waiting to guard her home, as he had rightly imagined she would bring the Play hither.

On the morrow, on her way to Carestini's, the ballad-girl sought the goldsmith's shop. She found him in it, and engaged talking to the same homely-looking man she had observed on the settle of the "Swan" the night she sang there to Mr. Francis. Again he keenly observed her ; for her face, in its child-like simplicity, was a most striking one.

As soon as he had stood aside, and read the note, the portly goldsmith burst into divers exclamations concerning Alice ; declaring, if Ruthven were found, he would marry her right off at once to him, and set the miserly old bookseller at defiance—this the more readily that he knew Cratch did not care a tittle for her, though she owned his blood ; nor meant to leave her a shilling of his hoard. Then recurring to his note again, he bid his assistant and apprentices mind the shop, and then retired into a little adjacent counting-room, followed by the ballad-girl, and also, at his invitation, by the observant gentleman.

"Now go on, my wench, and tell me something of this story," he kindly said. "Alice saith thou

canst relate a marvellous history. And do not mind this gentleman; he is a goodly neighbour of mine—Mr. Hogarth, the painter.”

In such illustrious company, therefore, did Jill tell the story that we know. If some points of it were obscure to Tendril, others were clear. He knew that Cratch was not nice as to his methods of making money, and perceived at a glance that he had been Ogilvy's tool from the first, and that Tickle had been sought for in the Fleet as a man venal enough to be bribed, and sufficiently lettered to become a daily spy upon Ruthven, under the guise of rendering assistance in the translation of a classic author. The aim was to entrap him into such an expression of political opinion as might make him amenable to the atrocious laws against libel then existing; failing this, to forge such evidence of a like crime as might lead to the same result. The purpose to be gained was to satiate Ogilvy's hate.

“Thou art a brave, bright lass, though a chick younger than my Alice,” said Tendril, when the girl had told him all she knew; “and deservest the divine voice the town saith thou hast. Now, see this Chirpster, if Mistress Mead permit, and thou canst with safety; and in the meanwhile I will seek Cramp, the magistrates at Westminster's constable, whom I know, and hear what he would suggest; and towards evening I will walk to Houndsditch, and see the worthiest little man it holds, and my darling god-daughter in the bargain.”

So saying, the goldsmith gave the girl a guinea, and let her go.

"That child hath a sweet face," said the great artist, thoughtfully, when the ballad-girl was gone; "though there is so much that is mournful in it, as if of fate past and to come."

And Hogarth looked at his left-hand thumb-nail, on which he had been sketching, as was his habit when anything striking or ludicrous came before his view.

"Hast thou her there already?" asked the goldsmith, looking too. "Why thou hast, indeed! Well, when thou hast time, thou canst make a picture for me; a composition piece, if thou wilt. I need one for the parlour-chimney of the old Essex house I shall rest in by-and-bye."

Jill's music-lesson was a brilliant one that day. Dr. Arne was present, and she tried some of the airs in his new opera of "Artaxerxes." She succeeded well; Carestini was enraptured. It was settled she should sing in public, and, if favourably received, make a more prominent *début* before the town, as Polly Peacham in the "Beggars' Opera." This character had already been matchlessly sustained by the beautiful Miss Fenton; but there was room for other Pollies, though none might so excel.

With Mistress Mead's permission—though it was reluctantly given, for she, as well as others, began to perceive that there was great possible danger to the girl's life, in her being thus so prominently opposed to the base designs in action

against Ruthven—Jill, under the care of an old watchman, set out that same afternoon in search of Mr. Chirpster. By inquiries made by this attendant, it was found he had been for some time dismissed by Grinder; and he was eventually traced to a mean house in the Old Bailey. Here he had hired a garret, befitting his lessened fortunes; but though cut off from singing further of Corydons and Phyllises in the "Post-Bag," he was found characteristically nursing his widowed landlady's baby, and singing to it those ditties that no longer were sentimentally to enrapture the ear of the town. Not a whit abashed at this discovery of his new office—for the same true heart that had made him give the ballad-girl his last penny, though at a moment when *in extremis* himself, still accompanied him—he welcomed Jill; congratulated her on her brave fortunes, and listened with intense interest to the business for which he was sought. Its recital made much clear to him. He saw at a glance that Grinder's pretext for his dismissal was referable to other reasons than the one assigned. He was too quick-witted; and the little room he had rented, being at the rear of the house, might have led to his cognizance of the sick man, Mrs. Pugg's ministrations thereto, and the motives at bottom for Grinder's course of action. Chirpster at once promised his aid; and knowing, as he said, "the ins and outs of Mrs. Pugg's fortress, and the date of those hours in which she sought the soothing influence of strong waters, he would begin his

task that very afternoon." He was as good as his word ; but Mrs. Pugg was a watching dragon, not easily lulled.

Tobias Gilpill's shop was within a few doors of the old churchyard already spoken of, and a portion of its windows looked thereon. Two of these latter lighted what was called "the tea-room ;" and herein, occasionally, at about five o'clock P.M., the bachelor-apothecary entertained some five or six spinster and widowed ladies of his acquaintance. They had been, or were, for the larger part, patients, and at divers times had nourished treasonable designs against the little doctor's heart ; but hinting to them, one by one, as he did to most ladies past the age of forty, that he had none, that his had been buried thirty years in a certain grave, their flame of love sobered itself into that of friendship, and they were henceforth content to knit his stockings, hem his best ruffles, and accept his invitations to tea and cards. In return for their disinterested charity to his avowed bachelorhood, he gave unmistakable souchong in the very best china, put something nice and sly in every cup—at which his visitors pretended to cough, to look ashamed, to draw their cups away, though invariably to put them back again—and he wound up with nice suppers of oysters, sweetbreads, and such-like delicacies.

On this afternoon, when, wan and ill, Alice arrived in her chair from Paternoster-row, one of these platonic tea-drinkings was in full bloom ; but at the sight of her it became a minor affair,

and, as soon as it was over, he led his favourite into his little *sanctum* behind the shop, where he received patients, and through the openings of a red curtain, drawn across the intervening window, had an eye on the proceeding of his boy Bob. Soon he heard her story, soon pitied with his whole heart her deeply moving tears; for he had admired the intellectual and manly Scotchman, and had felt that genius was his. Then, whilst he exclaimed, "Hush! hush!" and said "that he would find him—that he would," he pondered deeply, and tapping on the red-curtained window, summoned Bob. That young apothecary was deep in the mysteries of pill-making, and came in enveloped in an unodoriferous cloud of rhubarb and assafoetida.

"Bob," said the little man, smoothing his ruffles, "you know a great many apothecaries' boys, don't you?"

Bob tried to reckon them, but failed; so making a rough estimate, he said, "A hundred, may-be, sir."

"Any about Cripplegate, or say Grub-street?"

Bob thought again, and then replied, "There are a good many apothecaries just there. There's Quince, and Smith, and one named Shade; the last, sir's as thin as the apothecary in the play; and he hath never passed, it's said, at Barber-surgeon's Hall, though he's a pole above his door—he keeps a boy."

"Well, make his, or any other boy's acquaintance, and play with him, and treat him to long



toffee, till you've found out what patients his master hath got, and if one lies ill at Grinder's, a large dilapidated house where a lot of needy writers meet. If you'll do this, Bob, you'll help to dry this lady's tears; and you shall have a run of the syrup-jar for a twelvemonth, without danger of a pinch from my thumb and finger."

Bob licked his lips anticipatively, said, "Yes, sir," and withdrew.

In a moment more Mathew Tendril walked into the shop, and soon was in the little *sanctum*, with Alice weeping in his arms. He sought to soothe her—and this he succeeded in doing more effectually than Mr. Gilpill, for he promised her that he would rest neither day nor night till Ruthven was found—that when so, he should be carried to his house, and cured and nursed; and that, when well again, there should be a brave wedding of it, for which the fatted calf should be killed. Then he went on and talked of Jill, and all he said so warmly in her praise was echoed by both Alice and the little doctor.

"Now, my dear," continued Mathew, "you shall go home no more to Cratch; he's worthy of neither thee nor Beck. I have bid Mistress Hartwell, my housekeeper, get all ready for thee; and Mr. Tobias must come and give thee pill and potion."

"But will it not be wrong leaving my uncle thus?"

"No. He's said more than once that he should be glad to be rid of thee; and, as I had the keep-

ing of thy little fortune, I might keep thee. This is the truth, Alice ; so home with me you come."

"But—but, godfather, there is the precious Play!"

"Thou hast locked it up, surely?"

"Yes, in the little brass-bound box thou gavest me."

"Well, there it'll be safe. By degrees Beck can bring thy things, this box amongst the number. We'll say nothing to Cratch, or he'll be claiming this and that as his."

After some further talk with worthy Tobias as to the course to pursue with respect to Ruthven, Alice was placed tenderly in her chair and guarded by her godfather to his home, where Tobias promised to pay a visit in the morning.

When it reached his ear, which it speedily did, that Ruthven was thus zealously sought for, Amhurst felt that he could do little more in the matter, and he turned his attention to another point. Finding that the play had been carried in safety to Alice, he resolved to take some measure for its production on the stage; and to this end, after a week or two's delay, he sought Fielding, with whom he had a slight acquaintance. The future great novelist had as yet written but one work of fiction, that of "Jonathan Wild"; but he was already well known as a successful writer for the stage, and for the political press.

After seeking for Fielding in several of his customary haunts, Amhurst was referred to Drury

Lane : here he found him in the actors' room, the play for the night being the "Temple Beau." As he crossed the room to a table, about which Fielding and some of the performers were gathered in conversation, Amhurst was attracted by a man who, richly dressed, emerged from a little three-cornered room devoted to the use of the manager and his particular friends. His walk he knew. The superb curl of the Ramillies wig could not conceal his features, and Amhurst recognized Tickle. The latter, finding himself observed, slunk away with undisguised trepidation.

For some moments Fielding and Amhurst talked upon indifferent matters.

"Is there truth, Mr. Amhurst?" asked the former, "in what is said of Bolingbroke's return, and the 'Craftsman' rising from its ashes?"

Amhurst shook his head, held up his wasted hand before the candle, and said his work was done.

"Pooh!" replied Fielding; "turn your tables, and the Phoenix will live—and, like King Richard, 'dive into their hearts, and woo poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles.' My Lord of Orford has not taken all the spectacles to Houghton, or drained the coffee-houses of their politicians."

"Let the ashes of the 'Craftsman' rest, Mr. Fielding," said Amhurst, bitterly. "Let them rest! It is a livery that hath passed for ever

from the hireling who wore it. Let it be forgotten. I have something worthier to talk of."

So saying, he told Fielding the history of Ruthven's Play, asked him to read it, and—if his opinion were favourable—to place it before Cibber.

"I will gladly read it, but for Mr. Cibber I cannot answer. He hath now only partial management, and several unacted plays are on hand. Only a day or two ago a stranger came to him, offering him a comedy. He refused even to let it be left; but by some accident he glanced at a portion as the manuscript lay before him, and was struck therewith. He then retained it, took it home, read it at once, and was so struck by its extraordinary excellence as to resolve to put it at an early date upon the stage. This very afternoon the author hath been paid £50 on its account."

"Well, though I hardly look for such brilliant fortune for Mr. Ruthven's Play, I am sure you will like it; for he is a man of extraordinary power. With your leave I will send it to you this evening."

"Thank you. What's its name?"

"I think \* \* \* \*; but I am hardly sure."

"Well, send it. You shall hear from me in a day or two."

From Drury-lane Amhurst hastened to Leicester-fields, where he knew Alice was. He found she was too indisposed to be seen; but the old goldsmith received him with great courtesy, sent

off at Alice's request a trusty apprentice to Mistress Beck for the box containing the Play, and in the interval invited him to supper. This, though lengthened out by much pleasant chat, had been long over before the youth returned; for Cratch, since Alice had left, had locked up her chamber, and kept the key in the shop—so that it was only by subterfuge Beck could get at it. As soon as it arrived, Matthew Tendril took the box himself upstairs, for Alice to unlock it and give him the Play. He was gone some time, and when he returned with the manuscript in his hand, he had something curious to impart.

"Alice saith—and this with tears—that the Play hath been meddled with since she put it in the box. Of this I cannot say, but the lock hath certainly been tampered with, as though by the introduction of an ill-fitting key—for it is one of rare and curious construction, as I bought it and the box when last in the Low Countries."

As he said this the goldsmith exhibited the manuscript. It seemed, as Amburst thought, to be wrapped in the same brown paper as when taken by the ballad-girl; but this was now crumpled and worn, as though by frequent opening, and the pages were dog's-eared, flecked with ink, and spotted with what seemed to have been beer.

It was resolved to make inquiry of Beck as to who had frequented the room during the time Alice had been absent; but as nothing further could be done that night, the Play itself was

wrapped in a fresh envelope, sealed, directed "To Mr. Henry Fielding, at Drury-lane," and so put ready to be forwarded the first thing in the morning.

Amhurst had left his address with Fielding, and the next morning but one after supping with the goldsmith, Mrs. Bobkin's well-scolled drudge brought him a note before he was out of bed. It ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—Let me see you at Drury-lane by noon. I have looked through the Play, and seen Mr. Cibber. To our amazement, the Play sent and the one for which he hath just paid £50 are the same, with only change of title! The last-named hath, it is clear, been hastily copied from the first. There must be a mistake somewhere.

"Yrs.,

"HEN. FIELDING."

As a flash of lightning Amhurst recollected Tickle's face, and the whole was plain to him. This fellow had through some means got access to the Play, copied it, and palmed it off on Cibber as his own. Could not something be made of this latter point? Amhurst's eminently fertile brain answered in the affirmative.

Proceeding first to Leicester-fields, and seeing Matthew Tendril, he suggested what had occurred to him. Of this the goldsmith highly approved. It was—to reimburse Cibber with the sum paid, keep the matter a profound secret, lead Tickle (should he again make his appearance at Drury-

lane) on to think that he was wholly unsuspected, and have the Play so put in rehearsal as to be ready for a brilliant denouement when Ruthven's recovery and marriage to Alice made it desirable. To carry this plan out, Tendril gave Amhurst £60, and the latter took his way to Drury-lane. Fielding and Cibber were both there. The latter, with his money once more safe, entered heartily into the plan; not that he would have been a loser, as he said, for the Play was a masterly production. But it was best, considering what a history it had, to stand on its own great merits. Such plan being settled, Fielding generously undertook to read and prepare it for the actors.

Time wore on. As it did, Grinder's tactics changed; their balance being now in favour of Ogilvy. The latter, goaded on by his profligate necessities, and persuaded by his valet (who served his own interest in so doing), had had divers interviews with Margery Trapple, and promised her marriage in the early summer of the ensuing year, provided in the interval she flushed his pockets with some hundreds. Though the sordid hag would have rather thrown her golden grain after, than before her bird was caught, she was still too anxious to become "my lady" to absolutely refuse; so divers hundreds, secured on Scotch nonentities, were transferred from her money-bags to Ogilvy's purse. One of these hundreds had enriched Grinder; fifty and ten of another had severally enriched Tickle and Miss Fogg; for the honourable se-

cession of Amhurst, as soon as aware of the baseness of the prompting motives, and with such secession, the death ere birth of the proposed "Scorpion" newspaper, had necessitated a new plan. Such (as now concocted) was the production, in the fulness of time, of a pamphlet, to be entitled "A Letter to a North Country Member;" its tendency, as a matter of course, to be most libellous. This Miss Fogg's classic pen was to write; its finishing touches were to be given by Tickle; and finally when printed, and a propitious political moment for its production came, Pounce was to be the informer; Cratch, Grinder, and Babble to swear to the artfully-forged handwriting of the manuscript; whilst Ogilvy, through backstair influence, would urge on the ministry to such vindictive retaliation as the villainous law of the time permitted. Such was the scheme in hand.

But though slowly, the Westminster constable, Mr. Chirpster, and syrup-loving Bob, progressed surely. The latter, taking to play football in the neighbourhood, and seducing by an unlimited amount of "long-toffee," had soon the lean apothecary's boy for his ally. From him he learnt that his master went often after nightfall to Grinder's, and that he personally delivered there divers modicums of physic directed to Mrs. Pugg, who was said to be indisposed. Still more did Bob effect. Learning from his brother physic-deliverer that Mr. Shade kept queer things in his house, he professed a vast curiosity to see them, and finally induced the boy to let him have in-



spection thereof. Through this means (Shade's house looking from its rear on Grinder's) he ascertained various small corroborative points that were of account in setting to rest the fears respecting Ruthven. A fire burnt day and night in the dreary back-room; Mrs. Pugg went to and fro with plates and basins; then Cramp, in alliance with Mr. Chirpster, brought his wit to bear still more effectively. Ascertaining that Grinder went now often westward to dine (for he disdained Mrs. Pugg's cookery whenever his pockets were full), Cramp habited himself somewhat as a beadle, and waited upon Mrs. Pugg, in one of these diurnal absences of her master. The obese matron was in a very janitor-like humour; but Cramp, producing an official-looking paper, with the king's arms engraved thereon (he had already made sure she could not read), said he was deputed by the Corporation at Guildhall to look at the parish dilapidations, and must therefore inspect the back-premises. Very reluctantly Mrs. Pugg consented, and led the way through her cavernous kitchen. Appearing to heed nothing, the constable, when once in the yard, proceeded to sound walls, look at roofing, gutters, and so on, and, affecting to stumble by the window of the darkened room, had time enough to catch a glimpse within, and to observe what appeared to be a recumbent figure on a miserable bed, with a small table near, on which stood papers and medicine. So artfully was this moment's glimpse effected as to escape the janitor's observation. Re-

turning to the kitchen, Cramp dallied a little, and slipped a crown-piece into the matron's hand, assuring her it was the usual fee afforded by the Corporation when troubling housekeepers under such circumstances.

"It's kind on 'em," quoth Mrs. Pugg, softening a little; "I'm sure I wishes they'd mend up the house a bit; but Grinder's so mixed up with his writing-folks as to care nothin' for them as has to do his washing and stitching."

"He ought to do," said Cramp, compassionately, "for thou look'st but poorly."

"Ay! I just may; I'm desperately troubled with the colic." And Mrs. Pugg sighed.

"Bless me—I've a daughter that hath somewhat the same disorder; but I'm curing on her." Here he looked profound; Mrs. Pugg inquisitively.

"Yes, I am," continued Cramp, lowering his voice as though imparting a secret, "by doses of gilliflower water, of my own compounding; a little mixed (this quite between ourselves) with aqua-vitæ, that's quite genuine. Indeed, I am on my way to her this very minnit with a dose or so in a bottle, which thou shalt taste." So saying, the constable produced a small medicine-like looking bottle, with which he had armed himself, as a fowler with a gun, or a fisherman with a net. He knew how to catch his prey.

"Now taste a little; it'll do thee good!" So Pugg tasted; and, like our first mother with the forbidden fruit, tasted and fell.

"Well, as I see it doth thee good, and thou art an uncommon nice civil woman, I'll call here some evening with my daughter, a fine young cre'tur, and present thee with a bottle. I likes to be doing good, Mrs. Pugg, when I can."

"Much obleeged to ye, sir. Come Toosday; Grinder'll be out, and that great *he* cre'tur, Mistress Fogg, not here."

So Mr. Cramp went on "Toosday," accompanied by Mr. Chirpster, disguised as a woman, in patches, high-heeled shoes, and lutestring cloak; and so well did they the pair manage as to make many important observations, and pave the way for a third visit, at the special invitation of Mrs. Pugg.

On the appointed evening they went, having a coach in readiness at the corner of the street, and within it Mr. Gilpill. Taking the janitor quite off her guard by their well-affected air of innocence, they so effectually administered gilliflower water as to have the matron helplessly drunk within an hour. Then locking her into a sort of pantry, they took her keys and proceeded to the room at the rear. Three doors had to be unlocked before it could be entered; and when it was, they found Ruthven helplessly stretched upon the miserable bed on which he had now lain so many weeks; not dead certainly, but in that last stage of dire exhaustion which often precedes death. He could speak only in a whisper; his wasted, clammy hands he could not move.

"We are friends, sir," wept Chirpster, kneel-

ing. The singer of the tears of Corydons could weep genuine ones, as well as woo the Muse.

"Alice—Alice! She never comes." Then the pitifully-wasted creature swooned.

Mr. Gilpill was called; the coach was brought to the door; the patient, wrapt in a rug, carried to it, and hartshorn administered. Then the coach was driven, slowly—very slowly to Leicesters-fields. During its transition, syrup-loving Bob alighted from the box to summon the great Dr. Mead to the "Golden Rose." When arrived there, Ruthven was conveyed to bed, care being taken not to let Alice know of his being there, or of his extremity; as she was herself yet but an invalid.

That night Dr. Mead and Mr. Gilpill watched beside him; a large part of the morrow; the next night too.

As day broke again he sensibly rallied; was cognizant that tender watchers were round his bed; could again repeat, "Alice!—Alice!"

At noon, after some hours' absence, the great physician of his time was again in attendance. "I think," he said, drawing the goldsmith aside, "that there is another physician in the house who could aid. Bring the girl!"

Tendril hastened to his god-daughter's apartments, and said, gently, "Put on thy cherry-coloured overgown, pretty one, and step with me. It is not far. At last one hath need of thee!"

"Oh! he is found!—hath come!—is here!"

"No tears, my sweet. There, dry them—and lean on me. A good physician never weeps!"

She put on cherry overgown, and toy-like Flemish cap, and went hurriedly and trembling on the old man's arm, along the polished corridor to Ruthven's chamber.

"Now, no tears, child!" said the physician, leading her to the curtained bed. Then, aside to Tendril and the nurse, "Let us leave them for awhile. Those little hands and lips will minister their own divine medicine."

Opening the curtains she knelt softly down, as a mother to the cradle of her wakening babe; peeping—caressing—gathering herself to what she loves.

Time wore on.

Though Ruthven's debility was for a period most alarming, and the sword-thrust in his arm, from long neglect, difficult to heal, still the great Dr. Mead's prescriptions, both spiritual and material, proved in the end efficacious. As soon as possible the patient was removed from town to Tendril's patrimonial estate in Essex. Attached to this was a fine old Elizabethan house, called "Hayes," beautifully situated on the uplands of a little winding river, and surrounded by the primeval oaks of Hainault Forest. Here, sedulously watched and nursed by Mistress Beck, whom Cratch had dismissed, and visited for days at a time by Alice, Ruthven slowly approached convalescence.

To take anything like a feeling of dependence from his mind, Tendril, through the interest of Amhurst and Fielding, procured him some light work from Millar the bookseller, as soon as he was again fitted for literary duty. Thus writing, wandering in the fine gardens and adjacent woodlands, and visited by occasional London friends, Ruthven's days passed happily.

Amongst those who thus came to see him—sometimes in company with Alice, when her visit would extend to several days, or in a more formal manner with Mistress Mead, in her coach—was the ballad-girl. Between her and Alice much native sympathy was found to exist; and this, as time passed on, ripened into sincere affection. For the one never lost sight of her good nature and gentleness, the other of her humility; thus the accord was perfect. Indeed, to Ruthven, as well as to his pretty Alice, the ballad-girl's character was the object of their admiration and wonder, for no corruption had essentially corrupted it; and gradually, as innocence and purity of life environed her, so did the most childish innocence and simplicity again invest her with their sweet attractions. It was a delight likewise to Ruthven and Alice, as well as to Mr. Francis, his sister, and others, to watch the ballad-girl's enjoyment of the country. Here, as spring broke, she came often, and enjoyed the time intensely; for hitherto cooped up in the lowest haunts of the city, nature in her woodland freshness was a new thing; and no pleasure was so great to her as to take her music in the open

air and practise Carestini's last lesson whilst seated at the foot of some old tree. Here for hours she often sang, unconscious of listeners, though some were mostly by.

Perhaps she enjoyed the liberty of these days the more, for the reason that a change had fallen on her London life. She was now watched and guarded everywhere, for several well-written anonymous letters had been sent to Mistress Mead and Mr. Francis, enjoining caution, and hinting that some deep-laid scheme of revenge was in existence against their protégée. They cherished her too well not to take these hints; and by their wise proceedings frustrated evidently several attempts to lead her beyond the limits of their protection. One evening a chairman came to fetch her, on the pretext that the hag who had nursed her lay dying; on another it was said Carestini needed her to sing. The plans to entrap her were many, yet all failed. Thus she was guarded everywhere—to her singing lessons, to Mr<sup>d</sup>. Bligh's lodging, to the house of Hogarth, during the period she sat for Master Tendril's picture; on Sunday, Johnny Bobkin took reverent care of her, both in and out of church; and to make even her very hours of sleeping secure, Mistress Mead had a bed placed for her in a pleasant closet through her own room.

Though thoroughly glad to get rid of his niece and housekeeper, so as to be enabled to carry out his plans for saving to their full extent, still Cratch affected anger at the worthy goldsmith's proceed-

ings. This affectation merged itself into somewhat of reality, when he learnt that his niece was about to marry Ruthven—indeed, that great preparations for the wedding were already commenced. “Such a beauty as his niece,” he grumbled, “might marry a lord, instead of a beggarly Scotch author. But he washed his hands of the matter, though he wished the disobedient hussy to know he would not leave her a groat.”

Regardless of these threats, which, as a matter of course, met his ear, the noble old goldsmith was unmoved in his resolve. He said “he loved the girl as dearly as any daughter; and caring nothing for lords, or hangers on political favour, he would marry her to the man she loved, more especially as he was an honest man, and nature had invested him with riches of her own, in a fine athletic person, and a vigorous and original intellect. Nor should his darling be penniless, but take Ruthven a dowry, as well as innocence and budding beauty.”

As though to enrich good with good, there reached Ruthven about this time letters from Scotland, containing the fact that a certain Highland laird, and relative of his, had lately died, leaving to him a small landed estate of an annual value of about three hundred pounds English. This piece of pleasant fortune came most unexpectedly, as the testator had through life avoided all intercourse with his kindred, shunning more especially those who needed aid. The business, therefore, connected with this matter requiring Ruthven's presence, he went by ship to Scotland



for some weeks, though with many tender protests from Alice against his absence. But her fears proved groundless. Beyond settling legal business, receiving a considerable sum of ready money, visiting his father's and mother's grave in the picturesque burial-ground of the little Highland kirk wherein the former had preached, and seeing many old friends, nothing occurred. Returning homewards by land, and resting in Edinburgh, he sought out M'Kay, the poor student whose Latin thesis Ogilvy had surreptitiously obtained. He found him the same simple-minded being as ever, wedded to his classical books, and to his humble duties as usher to a low form in the High School. On the pittance so obtained he supported an idiot sister, and a distant relative of his dead father's—an old woman of more than ninety. The three occupied a mean flat in the Old Town, and struggled on from day to day rather than lived. Still M'Kay heartily welcomed Ruthven, and gave him the best entertainment his means afforded. Late in the evening, when some hours of pleasant chat were at an end, and Ruthven had risen to go, his eye was attracted by an old faded sampler hanging in the shadows of the high mantel-shelf. A candle had been set accidentally near it, or it would not have been seen. On it was worked, "Lucinda Trapple, her work, A.D. 1702." Ruthven fancied that he had heard this name before, but when or where he could not say, still the fact struck him. Next morning when the poor usher had come to say farewell, thus giving Ruthven delicate oppor-

tunity of pressing some guineas into his hand "for friendship's sake," the latter asked about this name.

"It was my mother's," replied M'Kay; "she was London born, and very pretty, it is said. But her friends, who wanted to make money by her marriage, turned her adrift because she married my father, who was poor, and nothing more than a journeyman corn-factor. He was a silent, stern man, and took her treatment much to heart. He brought her to Scotland, where she soon afterwards died in giving me birth, as poor Maggie is older than I am. From that time he never mentioned anything of my mother's history, so that that old sampler, and a few things that auntie hoards, are all that time hath left." This being all that M'Kay knew, the subject dropped.

Greatly renovated by his journey, Ruthven was joyfully received by his pretty Alice. For the few remaining days of his single life he returned to Mrs. Bobkin's second floor, whither that dame heartily welcomed him, as did the poor scolded drudge, to whom gentle words and smiles were precious coin. Amhurst was still there, though suffering from prostrating illness, and, what was worse in Mrs. Bobkin's eyes, from poverty. She no longer invited him to take tea, carefully preserved John's marital privilege of saluting, much to the comfort of the little man, and did not care for his praise of her chintz gown; for no debility was so sore in her eyes as that connected with the pocket. But with Ruthven's presence matters mended.

Rich with a generous heart—that indubitable ally of genius—he took delicate means of making this poverty less, so that Mrs. Bobkin smiled once more, and harmony reigned in the household.

The friends—for such their daily and lettered intercourse soon made them—talked over many matters connected with this little history. They moreover sought to bring Mr. Grinder to justice; but, as heretofore, when the point was tried by both Tendril and the little Hounsdlitch doctor, it failed. The Mæcenas of Grub-street pleaded kind intent, in taking an unknown stranger in; indeed, went so far as to call himself an ever-ready Samaritan, pouring in all wounds oil and balm; and said that it was no fault of his that messages sent to Ruthven's friends failed to bring answers, or that they had neglected to use a writ of Habeas Corpus. Indeed, as he said, complaint was on his side as well as need of justice, for his philanthropy had entailed upon him needless outlay; his dwelling had been entered under false pretences, and violence had been done to excellent Mrs. Pugg by locking her into a closet. Thus as matters stood, and must do so unless conspiracy could be proved against him, the business for the time dropped, though not lost sight of.

With that amazing blindness which villains always show to the natural effects of such causes as they have put in action, Tickle soon believed that his fraud upon Cibber had succeeded in more senses than one. Upon first receipt of the fifty pounds, he had changed his name and quietly re-

tired to rustic seclusion at Hampstead; but as week by week passed by and nothing of an unpleasant nature met his ear—indeed, as a letter reached him through the hands of Miss Fogg, intimating that *his* play was in rehearsal, and would in due time come forth—he began to think that he might as well again appear upon town, and enjoy an honour which the fortune of the gods had given. Still he was puzzled as to how such fortune had come about. The only reasonable solution appeared to be that Ruthven, wrapt in a dream of love, had let the Play rest snugly in the box to which it had been consigned; and thus a mere change of title, and a few hours' hurried penmanship, had made, if temporarily, the honour his. Other motives led him from his retirement. He again needed money, for his habits were recklessly improvident. To procure this, his purpose was to have the ballad-girl again in his power, and through her gain supplies from Mistress Mead or Mr. Francis. Failing her compliance he would marry her legally, and live upon the means her voice in its cultivated state was likely to bring. Such were his plans, when, through credit from his luckless tailor, he appeared once more in new attire upon the Mall and at the “Smyrna.” At the latter place he encountered Ogilvy, with whom he sought to renew his intimacy; but the latter, believing himself to have been cheated with respect to the Play, replied to Tickle's polite compliments with a haughty bow, and passed on his way. “He shall see the first representation of the Play,” thought Tickle.

"That will repay more haughty bows than one."

Indeed the *éclaircissement* connected with the forthcoming Play was likely to be a profounder one than even Mr. Tickle anticipated. For in conversation with Amhurst, Ogilvy's approaching marriage to Margery Trapple was mentioned, and the name attracted Ruthven. He then related to Amhurst his interview with M'Kay; and the consequence was that inquiries were made which quite set at rest Margery's relationship to the needy Scotch usher. This gave Ruthven a new idea; he consulted Cibber and Fielding—they approved of it; the rehearsal was temporarily stayed, new characters introduced, scenes slightly changed—the result of which we shall see.

Marriages in those days were much more formidable ceremonies than at present, and preparations were therefore in accordance. Unless a Fleet-marriage was made of it, or the pair for reasons of their own stole secretly to church—like Hogarth and Jane Thornhill—the celebration was a lengthened affair, affording enormous scope to the digestive powers of the guests, and the labours of cooks and servants. Thus as Tendril, for several reasons, wished his pretty goddaughter's wedding to be by no means a hidden circumstance, the preparations for it were both elaborate and slow in progress. New furniture was made or bought; floors and wainscot polished; the Turkey-merchants' sale attended for the purchase of new carpets; divers rich Spanish merchants had orders

for choice wine; and out of plethoric warehouses came tea, spices, and foreign fruit. Then the pickling of meat, and the rearing of juicy capons and tender ducklings at Hayes, were on a vastly hospitable scale; to say nothing of the fabrication of pastry and sweetmeats when the event was near at hand. Nor was the little beauty a tithe less preparative; mantua-makers, stay-makers, milliners, big-hooped dames bearing bags and baskets containing fiddle-faddles, and grotesque china, patches, pomatums, cosmetics, and essences, came daily to and fro; and the mercer and shoemaker occasionally swelled the number. But the goldsmith had a long purse and large heart; and the little beauty was not only very fond but very proud of her lover, although authorship was a thing terribly at discount in those days. So she took pains in the selection and elaboration of her wardrobe, calling to her aid the consultative powers of divers sage matrons as well as spinsters, including some of those Platonic gentlewomen who knitted Mr. Gilpill's hose and drank his sou-chong. The artillery of tongues on these recondite subjects went off with a surprising and continuous effect. But then our great-great-grandmothers were but women like ourselves; so let us be tender of their little frailties.

Sir John Ogilvy's necessities had compelled him to leave his house in Bow Street, for a mean lodging in a part of the Haymarket abutting on Oxenden Street. Though but newly built, it was already a fashionable quarter of the town, swarm-

ing with bagnios, coffee-houses, or other places where money could be spent or lost easily and disreputably; for though the worthy sanctity of Richard Baxter's name yet lingered within and about the chapel he had built, the result of the morality he preached was a perished thing amongst men who lived "fast" and drank hard. Thus here, in the larger of two small rooms, most wretchedly furnished, Sir John made preparations for supping with his forthcoming bride. These consisted in effecting his toilet to a perfection fitting Ranelagh or St. James. Pounce, with more good sense, wanted him to go modestly attired to his tête-à-tête supper with the amorous sexagenarian; but this, with his usual shallowness, he would not listen to, "wishing," he said, "to awe the hag by his superlative elegance, and let her understand the immense sacrifice a gentleman was about to make."

As a debt was due to every clear-starcher known to his valet, and the best set of ruffles were soiled, they had been consigned to the care of an Irish charwoman, who, for a groat, promised to restore stiffness and whiteness. As these had not arrived by the time Sir John was coated, wigged, ringed, and scented, Pounce set forth to seek them, leaving his master standing before the mirror—if an antiquated glass with a capacity for distorting might be so called. Here the popinjay found great amusement in rehearsing the part he was about to perform. This consisted in looking superciliously haughty, or in frowning and shaking his head, as though negativing some proposal he

considered preposterous; this occasionally varied by the coldest of smiles. But the oftenest repeated and most effective point of the actor's skill was a contemptuous wave of the hand, as though casting off from contiguity to his elegant person what was eminently distasteful.

Pounce returned with the ruffles a degree dirtier than when sent, and as stiff as tailors' buckram. As Sir John was an exquisite with respect to his linen, he was vastly enraged; but as time pressed, Pounce rubbed out a little of the starch, and his toilet was finished. He then set forth on foot, attended by his valet, who, whilst the master dallied with the mistress, was to pump the maid on divers points.

Marylebone was at that period a semi-rural place. But round the old church clustered a good many dwellings, interspersed with strips of garden and plots of ground. Amongst these was Mistress Trapple's house; betraying its great age by steps descending from the street, by the upper stories overhanging each other, and by huge diamond-paned windows of horn-like glass. In a sort of kitchen into which the steps led, Mistress Trapple transacted business, as had her father before her. Across a portion of it ran a strip of counter; piled on this, on shelves, in recesses called "hatches," and behind moth-eaten curtains, was a mass of varied articles; for Mistress Trapple, though ostensibly a dealer in curiosities, took other things, either for sale or as a security for borrowed money, though preferring plate, jewellery, post-obits, and



title-deeds; hence pictures and miniatures, tarnished plate, grotesque china, old lace, lawn, and wearing apparel, were amongst the adornments of this strange place. Adding to its look of age, masses of dust lay on everything; whilst cobwebs floating from the ceiling and shelves, and litters of all kinds strewing the floor, showed how little brush or duster was troubled. Nevertheless, this was a place of fashionable resort. Ladies of quality came far and wide in their chairs and coaches to buy china and bargain for lace. It was equally frequented by men of two classes—those rich and of the Horace Walpole stamp, who sought costly trifles; the rest needy, and anticipating the deaths of rich uncles or fathers, whose heirs they were.

At the rear of this mouldy-smelling chamber was another, vastly smaller, wherein on ordinary days Mistress Margery and her maid Ciss lived, but now apportioned to the entertainment of Mr. Pounce. Above the shop was a chamber of equal size, usually devoted to the storing of more precious articles, but now daintily arrayed for the tête-à-tête supper of the loving pair. Its spider-legged presses and tables had been dusted, a mirror hung, a harpsichord brought down from some remote garret, and a piece of mouldy carpet spread, on which stood two chairs, and a little table laid with delicate wine and viands. To be befitting such gala show, Mistress Trapple had put on her best attire, and awaiting her lover at the head of the narrow stairs, was ready to welcome him

as soon as he arrived and Ciss ushered him up.

"My dear sweet love," she said, running forward with the affected agility of a girl of sixteen, and seizing his exquisitely gloved hand, "how art thou?" She evidently expected a salute in lover-like fashion, but Sir John was cold as Polar ice.

"Well," he said haughtily, "now let me go in." With this he advanced into the chamber, and closed the door. She expected her salute now, but it did not come. Sir John's only care was to take off his gloves and hat, arrange his wig and sword, and sit down. He then spoke again.

"Will your moveable goods be ready for my inspection after supper? I am not one to make bargains, Mistress Trapple; but I must know fully what equivalent will be mine for making you a 'Lady,' and enriching you with a handsome husband?"

"I shall give thee what thou wantest in return," replied the hag, with shrewish bitterness. "Sir John hath not to marry me for nothing."

He saw he had gone a step too far; he retraced it, drew her towards him, and frigidly saluted her.

"Forgive me, my dear Margery; my humour hath been tried to-night. Now let us sup; after it I shall enjoy more fully the sweetness of thy company."

Re-assured by these hollow words, comforted by the salute, Mistress Trapple put her arms about her lover's neck, returned it warmly, and

ordered up such portion of the supper as was served hot. This consisted of spring ducks, peas, and other delicacies; for no cost had been spared to make the entertainment most *recherché* in kind.

As soon as it was over, and Ciss, the ill-favoured-looking maid had retired, Mistress Trapple proceeded to show Sir John her treasures—in post-obits, title deeds, and other things of like nature. After displaying a few of the most choice from the drawers of a cabinet hard by, she thought it time to hazard a proposal of her own.

“Will my sweet Sir John favour his Margery in a little matter? Hath he fixed the place for the marriage ceremony? If not, will he please her? May it not be at St. Paul’s, Covent Garden; and may not a little music go before—a drum and fife, or . . .”

“What!” interrupted the exquisite, in a rage so terrible as to awe the pitiless hag before him, “what! make me the laughing-stock of the town—a puppet for jokes at Will’s and the Smyrna? Isn’t it enough that I take a wrinkled hag of sixty, but she must go in state to show the town?” . . .

He rose, and pacing up and down, so continued for some minutes.

She sought with abject humility to pacify him, and found presently the due placebo.

“Come! Sir John must forgive his Margery’s naughty pride at his youth and beauty. Let her show him a little nice jewellery, that hath been a duke’s, and may one day be his.”

Whereupon he suffered himself to be led to

his chair, to be caressed and pacified. She then unlocked the secret drawer of another cabinet, and brought forth magnificent jewellery; amongst it a gorgeous diamond ring. In a minute he coveted the last, and sought to make it his. But for a long time the hag stood firm against his entreaties, making many excuses to return it to its resting-place. Presently, however, Sir John made it his, by a little dalliance, and the promise of three fives and a drum to church. Thus pleased, Mistress Trapple proceeded to lay bare the rest of her stores. When these were at an end, he perceived that she had omitted to show him the contents of one small cabinet that stood in a darkened corner of the room. Jealous of his gains, he questioned her about it.

"Oh, nothing, sweet Sir John," the old woman answered tremblingly, "only a few old letters—some clothes of the dead—a few remembrances of—of—"

"Let me see them."

Sir John followed her to the cabinet, and watched till she had unlocked it.

At this moment there was a knock at the door; hastening to open it, as though he knew who knocked, Sir John took his snuff-box from his valet. Making occasion presently to use it, he found therein this hint scrawled on a piece of paper:—"The maid says she hath heirs—a dead sister's children; get her to draw a will or deed to-night, making you absolute master of everything. Foxnose, her attorney, lives hard by."

With this for his cue, Sir John insisted upon a pretty close inspection of the contents of the cabinet; would look at poor faded memorials of the long-perished dead; a gown—a ribbon—some beads—a fan; would look, and that with haughty authority, at several pleading letters, signed, "Lucinda M'Kay;" and as he read the signature he faltered, and turned deadly pale.

"What M'Kay is this?—you said you had no relatives—no heirs. Thou hast lied already."

She was very abject in her humility, pleading excuses, and vowing that none but he—her dear Sir John, her sweet love—would possess her money.

"I never trust to promises! From what I find, the old man left a will—let me see it."

At first she denied it, then pleaded excuses; at last, seeing that her bird was yet in the bush, and might fly away, she most reluctantly produced some musty leaves of parchment—they were the will. The largest wonder attached to it was that it had not already been destroyed, for it seemed to have been drawn up in an hour of penitence, as it divided the old man's accumulations between his daughters equally—the children of the married one being final and absolute heirs.

"Dost thou know anything of this woman's son?" he asked with tremulous earnestness; or rather as one who, having participated in some guilty secret, dreads its revelation.

Her answer assured him she did not; that she

had hated her sister—dreaded the will—indeed, had thought of its destruction.

“Well, this shall be done to-night, my beloved Margery, this for reasons which have little to do with money. What’s more, as our marriage occurs in four days, the lawyer must be sent for, as he liveth hard by, and a deed must be drawn up, making me master of thy wealth the day I marry thee.”

Mistress Trapple was much startled at this proposition, as she had wished to keep the reins of power in her own hand, and dole out guinea by guinea in amount proportionate to the extent of love afforded her by her master; but the profligate was more than her match. An angry storm ensued, to quell which Pounce and the maid were called up-stairs; then followed caresses, which acted as an opiate to the avarice of the sexagenarian, and a compromise pleasing the two concerned was finally effected. Old Trapple’s will was consigned to ashes; Foxnose called in, and a deed drawn up, giving Sir John Ogilvy absolute possession of all property possessed by Mistress Trapple the morning she became his wife; whilst to her was conceded all arrangements for the wedding, including its solemnization at St. Paul’s, Covent Garden, with drums and fifes in attendance *ad libitum*.

It was very late when Sir John took his last glass of wine with Foxnose the lawyer; and later still when he gave his last salute to Mistress Margery. He then took leave, followed by Pounce,

who in the meanwhile had concerted a small underplot of his own, namely, to marry the maid ; as, though like her mistress she was old and ugly, she was the possessor of sufficient money to open an ordinary in some fashionable quarter of the town, and make her husband possessor thereof.

"Pounce," said Sir John, as his valet disrobed him of ruffles and wig, "your first errand in the morning must be to carry a billet-doux to that sweet little Miranda B., the dancer at Ranelagh ; and another to Chloe S., at Madame Turk's the Fleet Street milliner. The one shall have her jewels next week, the other her promised trip to Hampstead Wells—thus the old girl's money shall go—faugh !"

By perfect accident—though premeditated revenge could have produced no effect more startling—the morning that broke for Mistress Trapple's wedding broke also for that of Alice Stow. The little beauty's preparations were at an end at last—she would be a wife by noon !

She rose early, and though her toilet was delayed, rather than assisted, by Mistress Beck, Mistress Hartwell, five or six young friends, and one or more of Mr. Gilpill's platonic spinsters, and moreover involved extraordinary elaboration of powdering, patching, pinning, lacing, and other barbarous arts happily unknown in our day, it was over in due time for her to sit an hour or more, before the grand breakfast, to a fine miniature-painter of the day. This likeness of her had been for some weeks in preparation ; and now it

received its last touches, as she glowed in the virgin freshness of her wedding morn.

When all was ready, and the grand company come—more than eighty in number—the proud old goldsmith led the little, trembling, dew-eyed beauty in. Very lovely she was; and though stepping in high-heeled shoes, white with powder, dimpled with patches, and quaintly decked with fan and ruffles, and in a garb we might smile at, there blushed the human flower, and nature was the same. Indeed, there were men there who were connoisseurs in beauty by pencil or by pen—Hogarth, Fielding, Amhurst, and others; to say nothing of rich Turkey merchants, or their spiteful sons, who, covetous of the little beauty, thought the goldsmith an “old fool” for marrying her to “a beggarly author.” But, saving her godfather and her coming husband, there was none to whom the little beauty’s heart turned as it did to Jill; for the latter had sought her that morning, and they had in meeting wept tears—part grief, part love, in one another’s arms. To one—a marriage-day was dead!

Then came the mighty breakfast, during which a vast china bowl was set on the table; and then within this, or round it, all present visitors placed a rich gift. Fresh-minted guineas were numberless; next came caudle cups, apostle-spoons, silver drinking-cups, and other costly things. Breakfast over, the procession, partly in coaches and sedans, partly walking, set off to the then new church in Covent Garden. As the head of the party wound



its way into the narrow streets adjacent, it was met by a ragamuffin crowd, the tail of another throng, who, awaiting a bridal party within the church, had ceased to play upon certain mighty sounding drums and fifes which had heralded its coming. The ragamuffin tail, resenting this, kept up a hideous din, by rattling on tin cans, shaking a worn-out kettle, beating with shank bones on a board, and other disgusting methods of noise-making. Some of the servants, inquiring the reason, were told that a fashionable rake of the town was within, and being married to an ugly old woman twice his age.

Presently two beadles came forward, and told the goldsmith's party it would be best to alight and enter the church, which it did, though with some difficulty; the crowd, however, behaving with decorum, more especially when it beheld the beauty of Alice, and the grandeur of the ladies' dresses.

Waiting awhile at the bottom of the nave, the new-come party could hear the service then taking place at the altar, and distinguish a thin, squeaking, aged woman's voice respond to that of a man. Then the service presently ending, the newly married pair came with their one or two attendants down the aisle, as the goldsmith's party, at the bidding of the beadles, moved up. Thus the noble old man, with Alice on his arm, went first, followed by Ruthven and Mistress Mead.

Sir John Ogilvy, with his bride mincing on his arm—for Mistress Margery had put on juve-

nile manners with her attire that morning—was the first to see who it was thus meeting him face to face—Alice in richer beauty than she had ever shown before; and close behind her him she had chosen—him whom he hated with such hate as only demons know—him whom he had sought to ruin, nay to deprive of life, and to bring whom to a felon's death was a plot already planned and in progress. The sight was too terrible for his malignity to bear. For a moment he grasped his sword, as though to run it through Alice or Ruthven; but seeing the impossibility of effecting such a purpose, he gave one glance at the crooked, mincing hag at his side, and then flinging her arm off his with brutal violence, fled down the church amidst the hisses of the throng. With more good sense and feeling than might have been expected, the woman recovered herself, made some excuse for her newly married husband to the bystanders, and hastened on. Perhaps the infliction of cruelty and insult formed a portion of the price she looked to pay.

Ruthven and Alice were married, and a joyful procession led them home. Then followed a great dinner, worthy of both giver and partakers, and of such profuse hospitality as was the custom of the day. In due rotation came tea and supper, cards, dancing, forfeits, putting cake through the ring, tying it in a stocking, leading the bride to her chamber; nor were the festivities ended till the summer's day had again brightly dawned. For several successive days the bride sat to re-

ceive company ; then she and her husband went quietly away to the old seat in Essex.

During their absence, for the space of full a month, Jill was very busy practising her music. What little time she had to spare was devoted to the entertainment of sweet Mistress Mead, who had latterly failed in health, much to the concernment of Mr. Francis, and all who loved her. Jill's voice being by this time a famous thing, she sang occasionally at the nobility's houses. Here she was seen by the Duchess of Bolton, once Miss Fenton, who taking a great liking to her, not only for her angelic voice, but for the touching expression of ever-present sorrow and humility, called on Mistress Mead, and learnt her history. It deepened her sympathy, it increased her wish to serve ; and both she and the Duke offered to send the girl to Italy, if Carestini thought it needful. But the *maestro* did not. "Even if he did," replied Mr. Francis, "it is I and my sister that must send her there, for she is to us as our child." Thus needing no assistance of friends or money, the Duchess still found other ways of bespeaking her regard : she instructed her, gave her pretty presents, and arranged with Dr. Arne, Carestini, and Cibber that Jill should make her *débüt* in the "Beggar's Opera ;" on the same night the new Play of which the town said so much would be performed for the first time.

Indeed, the town was at this time rife with scandal and events of many kinds. Foremost amongst the former was Sir John Ogilvy's treat-

ment of his wife. His desertion of her in church had been the wonder of the day ; but worse followed. For a full week she saw nothing of him. For the first eight-and-forty hours she remained at his lodgings in the Haymarket ; then she returned home, and consoled herself as well as she could. Her greatest salve was the fact of being "my lady." Irrespective of this, her self-love would not let her think the worst of the worthless profligate she had made her husband. This blindness was fortunate, for could she have seen him on her wedding-night, when his place—however old or worthless she might be—was by her side, the Sardanapalus amidst abandoned women, and the dispenser of luxuries for which she had to pay, her jealous rage would probably have known no bounds. However, at the end of the first week he presented himself, full of penitence, apologies, and regrets ; and so simulated the part of a tender husband as to lull her anger and jealous suspicions. When he had obtained what he needed, namely, so much ready money, and certain title-deeds on which he could raise a few prospective thousands, he again disappeared, this time to his old lodgings in Bow-street, where venal tradesmen and parasites of all kinds again solicited his custom, and bowed before him. Again he appeared at Will's and the Smyrna, in radiant attire ; again he encountered Tickle, and this time lessened his supercilious haughtiness. His mood for conciliation was met. Tickle, never oblivious of resentment, wished to lure him to the first representa-

tion of the Play ; and Ogilvy, on the other hand, to gain his advice as to the period it might be best to print the "Letter to a North Country Member," which, already written by the classic pen of Miss Fogg, and revised by Tickle, lay ready in the hands of Grinder. For any point connected with this last dark plot, Tickle was as eager to assist as Ogilvy could wish ; his pecuniary need was urgent, and his resentment deep against Ruthven and his young wife, for the part he supposed they took in making Jill inaccessible to him, either personally or by letter. Thus far his plans for drawing the ballad-girl into his power had signally failed. For though he had waylaid her in every possible direction, she had been true to her noble resolution, that sin should be no longer hers, and passed him by in silence, though ever in humility ; whilst Mistress Mead had aided this noble resolution, by turning his letters of hollow profligacy into ashes. Thus Ogilvy and Tickle were again closeted with Grinder and Cratch ; the letter was put into the printer's hands, and Tickle and Miss Fogg, looking on the rest as mere puppets of their own, nourished their own dark plot of vengeance.

Alice and Ruthven returned to town, and the day for the representation of the Play came at last. It was to be followed by the "Beggar's Opera." Even up to this point, Tickle seemed to have no suspicion of the real truth—his credulity blinded him. Thus, when the Play was talked of in the coffee-houses, he hinted that it was his, and

none but those who knew him intimately disbelieved it. But whether owing to anticipations connected with the Play, to the interest attached to Jill's début in the "Beggar's Opera," or to the story of her life, much of which was noised abroad, and of one scene in which Hogarth, it was said, had just finished a matchless picture, the general excitement was extraordinary. For a week previously tickets were sought after, and eventually they were sold at fabulous prices, the Court competing with the nobility in the sums given.

After attending a rehearsal in the morning, at which the Duke and Duchess of Bolton, Dr. Arne, Carestini, Fielding, Hogarth, Mr. Francis Mead, and Alice were present, and which exceeded expectation in its faultless excellence, Jill returned to Bloomsbury-square to rest and prepare for the evening. The Duchess had sent her the present of a dress, the goldsmith a bracelet, and other friends other things. The only drawback to the anticipated pleasure arising from success was Mistress Mead's continued indisposition, which confined her to her chamber and her easy chair. When dressed by the tender care of the good old housekeeper, the young girl, looking lovely, though, as ever, pale, and enveloped as in a shadow, went down-stairs to her beloved mistress's chamber. The old gentlewoman had a small necklace of pearls, and a few rosebuds tied together with white ribbon, lying on a little table by her side. As the young girl knelt down

beside her to say farewell, the old lady put the one about her neck, the other in her bosom.

"The one, my dear," she said, "was given to me by my mother; thus thou wilt see I give thee what is precious to me. The other is typical of thee, and of the song thou didst sing to Francis in the chamber of the 'Swan,' and which Mr. Hogarth's great picture will make immortal. Now thank thee, dear one, on the night of this thy triumph, for all the sweet love thou hast shown me and mine."

"It is I who have to thank thee, lady—I—I—" She could say no more, but burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Why these tears, dear heart?" questioned the old lady, a little grieved and alarmed, she knew not why.

"I cannot tell, madam. I have been unaccountably depressed all day, for something like a shadow has hung over me. It is very foolish of me, seeing I have so much reason for happiness. But—but—I cannot help it!" and she still wept on.

The old lady was more alarmed than she liked to show; still she sought to console, and presently succeeded.

"Come, thou must cheer up, thou hast only the vapours; for nothing can harm thee, my dear one, seeing nothing but friends will be around thee. Hark! the Duke's carriage hath already come, that will bear thee to the play-house. Mr. Francis will be presently here to guard thee from

this chamber door, and to see thee home again. Come, there is nothing for low spirits—I shall be better in a little while. As for thy own life, my dear one, thou must remember no shadows in it. We all of us mar our lives by frailties, but their atonement is equally our own. Now let me put mine arms about thee, and say good-bye till thou comest back triumphant to me, for I hear the feet of Francis on the stairs.”

So they said their farewell—their last upon this earth.

When Jill arrived at the playhouse, in the care of Mr. Francis, the play had just commenced. As she would not be wanted till it drew to a close, her kind protector led her to a box contiguous to that of the Duke of Bolton, in which, in the rear, sat Ruthven, his bride, the goldsmith, Mr. Gilpill, and other friends. The house was densely crowded; even whilst undeveloped in the first scenes the Play was well received. By degrees the enthusiasm increased—plaudits soon arose—the success of the Play was a brilliant certainty. Since Congreve’s master-piece there had been nothing like it.

Alice, whose tender hand held that of Jill, saw little but the Play; but Ruthven, who was as it were a hidden spectator, observed several curious facts amidst the overwhelming throng. A box in the most expensive portion of the house was occupied by Ogilvy and Tickle, and some lavishly-bedizened women, who, by their abandoned looks and manners, were probably the companions of



the former. They, as well as the profligate by their side, were objects of incessant watchfulness to a muffled-up figure in an obscure corner of the pit. As Ruthven rightly conjectured, this was Lady Ogilvy, who had taken this measure to ascertain the truth of her husband's reputed infidelities. But as the Play proceeded, the conduct of the men themselves became the most extraordinary. At first they had been all hilarity, paying more attention to the house than to the Play; but as scene followed scene, the one who was unmistakably Tickle cast glances of deepening anger towards the box where the ballad-girl could be seen. Of course he now saw how completely he had been made the dupe of his own baseness; and his jealous hate, his wounded pride, his very fear, looked upon her as the cause of this retaliative justice. Presently he sneaked from the box, without a parting word to Ogilvy, went down into the pit, and sought out a woman seated there. With her he held a long whispered conversation; she then went away, after staring furtively at Jill. Then he disappeared, and was gone till the Play drew to a close.

On the other hand, Ogilvy seemed to be fascinated with what he heard. A few scenes convinced him that this was Ruthven's Play under another name, and that he had been duped into seeing it by Tickle. But that arch rascal had disappeared. Though wishing to go, he still sat on, heedless now of his profligate associates, with no eager ear but for what was before him, and

with the dew of mental agony standing in drops upon his forehead. Presently he was conscious that other eyes were upon him—those of his jealous wife and Ruthven. A scene now came that brought the climax. It was where a chief character, called Sir Fopling Filchbrain, steals into the chamber of a fellow student and carries off a piece of writing for the basest purpose. He could bear no more; the theatre swam round before his dazzled gaze, and he fell swooning into the arms of his Roxalanas. In a minute he was borne out by these women and a beadle—his sword dropping from its sheath, his wig from his head, his base-won finery fluttering round as worthless a piece of human clay as ever bore the form of man.

Unmoved by any feeling for him now, his wife sat on. The Play fascinated her equally. It told, amongst other things, of a usurer's daughter who had married, gone away, died, and left children in poverty. There was a scene in a far-off Scotch room, in which sat an idiot-girl, and a youth poring over books, that branded itself upon her brain, and touched in some degree her stony heart.

So from scene to scene the Play came to its close, and drew down the mightiest plaudits of the house. It had touched men's hearts—it had dimmed their eyes; here lay the proof of genius. The author was called for, and Tickle, from a hidden corner of the pit, beheld Ruthven retire

from the box and presently appear upon the stage, between Cibber and Fielding.

Then as Jill prepared to go, Alice drew her face lovingly towards her. "Thine," she whispered; "for it was thou who savedst it."

The opera began. Its cast of characters was a splendid one. Polly Peachem stepping on the stage was warmly received, and enthusiasm knew no bounds when her first song was at an end. Apart even from her all-glorious voice, there was much of personal feeling in the matter. Many of those present, both high and low, recollected to have seen and heard her in the streets, when, drenched with rain or shivering in the blast, she sung like the fabled bird with its breast against a thorn. People now prided themselves on the crust they had given, or the pence they had thrown down. Others could scarcely believe the change wrought in voice and look. Some even were deeply moved. Mistress Brownnut, of the "Swan," cried heartily; so did the Barbican smith's wife, and the smith himself roared out as heartily as his own bellows when applause was given. Then little Mrs. Bobkin sighed sentimental sighs behind her fan, tittering, "La! who'd ha' thought it?" and her most worthy husband, seated in an especial seat, drank in every sound of praise with delighted ears. From the royal box came signs of approbation; the Duke of Bolton rose constantly and cried, "Bravo, wench, bravo!" the wits of Wills', the Cocoa Tree, and the Smyrna made the roof ring.

Nor were these plaudits without cause; the Duchess of Bolton and Dr. Arne remembered that voice and those songs to their dying hour. Carestini was enchanted. But this enthusiasm was comparatively partial till the song—

“ I, like a ship in storms, was tost ;  
Yet afraid to put into land.

. . . . .  
. . . . .

Thus safe ashore,  
I ask no more,  
My all is in my possession.”

when it burst out again, again, and again.

In the matchless song, “Cease your funning,” the plaudits were the same.

By-and-bye the opera ended with a dance.

The curtain had not wholly dropped when the sweet singer was called for again and again. The house rung with cheers. Her noble master Carestini led her on. “Cease your funning” was called for. There she stood, ready to sing, looking lovely, though as ever shadowed. The pearls were on her neck, the rose-buds in her bosom, Alice’s ring upon her hand.

Glancing at the box where Mr. Francis sat, it was the thought and the act of the moment to sing the song she had sung to him in the chamber of the “Swan.” So she sung “Rose softly blooming.”

Then as she ended, and her voice died away, she drew slowly back, bending lowly as she went.

Thus she faded—faded—fa-ded !

Like a rose before its time—like spring into the frosts of winter—like a ray into the darkness of the night!

The eyes which loved her never saw her more!

\* \* \* \* \*

She was almost instantly missing; but all that could be ever learnt was that a message had reached her, stating that Mistress Mead had been taken most suddenly and alarmingly ill. A coach awaiting her at the stage-door, she had got in, and been driven off. There was no truth in this message—it had been a mere trap to catch the victim.

All search, reward, inquiry, proved vain. The secret was buried in hearts too black and deep to blab. Miss Fogg was suspected and instantly sought; she was found, nursing, as she said, her sick and dying mother. Nothing could be made out against her, nor against Ogilvy, who had been carried home insensible from the play-house. Tickle was missing. In less than eight-and-forty hours, however, fresh evidence of his villainy rose up. Cratch's apprentice, on going to open the shop as usual, could not make his master hear. Admittance was with difficulty obtained, and the old man was found in the little parlour, so cruelly used as to lie dying, and robbed of the enormous sum of gold it had been his delight to hoard in a certain strong cupboard. He survived but a few hours; but he made it clear to those around him that his assailer had

been Tickle, who, stealing upon him at a late hour from some upper chamber where he had concealed himself, brutally maltreated him, and robbed him of all he had. Cratch thus dying intestate, Alice was of course his heir. With this fresh clue search was again made for Tickle. But pursuit was too late; he had escaped, in a Margate hoy, to the Low Countries, and there for a time concealed himself. Miss Fogg, being still suspected of participation in his crime, her miserable dwelling was again visited. Then it was found she was gone too, having buried her mother and disposed of her few effects. In time it came out that she had followed Tickle—for writings flowed into this country that were unmistakably the fruit of their venal pens. As truly they were; for such were dutifully at the service of those enemies of their religion and country who in those days were called Jacobites.

Thus two, if not three, of his chief abettors gone, it might be thought that Sir John Ogilvy would have let the matter of the libel drop. But his hate was as insatiable as his soul was mean. The pamphlet was printed; and Grinder and Nathan did their part, as did the ministry, whose vengeance was prompted by Ogilvy himself. Ruthven was arrested at Hayes, and committed to Newgate under a prime-minister's warrant. There he lay for many weeks, suffering severely with jail-fever, and narrowly escaping with life. But ultimately the proceedings were quashed, and he was liberated. Conspiracy was

then proved against Nathan and Grinder. The former was imprisoned; the latter made his escape to some distant part of the country, where he changed his calling into that of a parish-clerk. Thus ended the reign of an infamous association, open to any bribe, fitted to any purpose; employing talent, yet debasing it by use. Thus fell a pest of the reign of the second George, and one whose influence may be traced through the newspapers and pamphlets of the time.

Good Mr. Francis never lifted up his head again. His only entreaty was for them to search for "his child." They brought him Hogarth's picture, painted for the goldsmith, of Jill singing in the chamber of the Swan. It proved his only solace, and the thing he last looked at; for he was found dead beside it. His sister did not long survive him; whilst Johnny Bobkin, growing thinner and thinner, left Mrs. Bobkin to widowhood and another husband.

From the hour Lady Ogilvy became an eyewitness of her husband's infidelity she was relentless. But the deed he had made his secured him against much substantial proof of her anger. At length he was killed in a tavern affray, and she was once more free, though poorer by half her fortune. Ultimately she died, as gracelessly as she had lived; and the money, without thanks to her, cheered the poor Scottish home. Pounce married the maid, and died a rotund landlord.

In less than two years after Alice's marriage Tendril gave up his business at the Golden Rose, and

retired to his estate in Essex. Here, surrounded by Alice and her children, he passed a green old age; his farm being attended to by Ruthven, who, shocked by the tragedy connected with his Play, and with the corruption of the authorship of his time, ceased henceforth to claim the name of author, though his love or interest in literature was none the less. After Tendril's death new views opened themselves to him and Alice. They formed the project of emigrating to America, and there become possessors of a wider extent of land than could be theirs in a country like this. So they sold Hayes, and prepared to go.

An evening or so before departing from their old home, a sort of overseer from one of the London poor-houses came to them. He brought them, folded in a rag, a pearl necklace and a ring. They were given to him, he said, by a very old woman, who died in the house a day or two before. She had been long an inmate, and deserted by her daughter. She had always shown uneasiness of mind, and in her dying hour confessed that both ring and necklace were the fruit of a murder perpetrated by her own daughter and a man named Tickle, on a poor girl who had once been a ballad-singer. To hide their deed they had affected that the old woman herself had died; then concealed her in a work-house, and buried the murdered body as though it had been her.

Thus they knew her fate at last. Knowing it, they left this land with even less regret.



They became possessors of a splendid estate in America, owned at this day by their descendants. Above a fire-place in the manor-house hangs Hogarth's picture of the chamber of the Swan ; and in a little oaken box rests the MS. of "Ruthven's Play."

May this memory of her be more lasting than the Rose of which she sung !

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL.

WHILST the story of "Ruthven's Play" has thus drawn to its close, the chaplain has entered and sat down; for he has, by uplifted finger and a "No, thank you—no," negatived any positive recognition of his presence. But now that Miss Eden lays down the manuscript, he greets the ladies, and draws his chair to the fire. They both can see that something is amiss by his grave expression of face, and he soon speaks of the troubles which lie so heavily on Shirlot.

"There is positive evidence," he says, "that the robbery of Mrs. Hutchinson's escritoire was effected by a man, and there is but little doubt that this man was her son. Since his scandalous subterfuge of illness, in order to extort money, his mother had utterly refused to assist him any more—and thus as he could not plunder her by one method he has by another. What is more, none but some one well acquainted with the hall and its precincts would have thought of effecting

an entrance by the gallery, and none but some one equally well acquainted with the more private business of the Charity could have known that on a certain day the matron would receive a specified sum for necessary expenses. Not only is this taken, but ten pounds in addition; making the whole loss in actual money one of sixty pounds, besides some plate and knick-knacks of considerable worth. After the robbery he was seen crossing the outer gate by old Harris; the print of footsteps in the gallery and closet tally precisely with the size of a shoe in his mother's possession; and the police have ascertained that the same man rested at an inn some four miles from here during the early part of last evening."

"What can be done?" asks Miss Morfe.

"I scarcely know; for, acquainted with the country as he is, he will most likely be able to elude pursuit—and his mother must in this case make good the money to the Trustees. But this is not her greatest trouble; Rhoda's disappearance afflicts her much more. The girl is naturally so sweet-tempered and well-disposed as to be a general favourite, and by the matron she is fondly loved. The little note she left on Mrs. Hutchinson's dressing-table gives no clue whatever to the cause of her disappearance—it only hints at some approaching trouble, begs for her good thoughts and sympathy, and holds out the hope that she may just now be able to return and plead her own cause."

Miss Eden is listening intently, and when Mr. Quatford ceases speaking she asks if Rhoda had any acquaintance in the village.

"Yes, this is the unfortunate part. Young Clayton, at the adjacent farm, has been lingering on her footsteps a long time; but Mrs. Hutchinson thought that she had quite prevented any further acquaintanceship between them, and that it had, in fact, quite died away. However, from what I have just now ascertained, it appears that, on the day Mrs. Hutchinson sent the girl with a letter across the hills to Woodend, this man followed her on horseback. His informant as to the poor girl's little journey was that worthless woman Mrs. Price. Rhoda did not return till quite late, and since then every one, I hear, has noticed her altered manner. There can be but one construction put upon the matter, and that a very painful one."

"I fear so too," replies Lucy, and with that she relates what she overheard as she passed the gable of the barn, not long before, and which hitherto she had not spoken of to any one. It is confirmatory of young Clayton's baseness, though it revives a hope that he will do Rhoda justice and marry her.

"If left to himself he might do so," says the chaplain, "but he has others to consult—his mother and sisters. He loves the girl perhaps, but he is weak and vacillating, and the impression left by the last persuader will prevail; so that as he is in terror of his mother, and as she says

that she would rather see him lie dead before her than that he should bring home a penniless bride, there will be no justice, I fear, to mitigate great cruelty and wrong. However, I will see him, and point out the stringent steps I mean to take, if he does not find Rhoda and marry her at once."

The chaplain then tells the ladies that he has called at the farm that day, but the master was said to be out, and he adds that he shall seek him again this evening. With this intent he goes presently, leaving Miss Morfe to bid Lucy good-night, and to hasten to see the matron, who is said to be completely prostrate with the new troubles which have come on Shirlot.

As he approaches the farm, Mr. Quatford encounters young Clayton, who is leisurely riding home, a little the worse, as it seems, for drink. But his progress is arrested, and sternly bidding him dismount, the chaplain says he must speak to him.

"What about, sir?" he asks, sullenly, as he, with evident reluctance, obeys—"won't to-morrow do?"

"Certainly not. Rhoda has absented herself from the hall, as perhaps you're aware, and you are accountable for her disappearance. It has been discovered to-day that you followed her on her walk to Woodend, and your conversation with her in the granary a short time ago was overheard. There is therefore no doubt as from what cause the unhappy child has fled. If, therefore——"

"I know I was a villain—a half-besotted villain that day," he interrupts, for that so much is known overawes him; "and I'd have done her justice before this, if the missis in-doors hadn't kept back every pound. But I'll get money, sir; I'll borrow it, or sell a horse, and be after the girl in a day or two and make her my wife—I will, indeed, Mr. Quatford. I love Rhoda better than all else in the wide world, and would have brought her home before this, if I hadn't such bonds and hindrances as no man else has."

"I'm glad to hear you speak so fairly, Clayton," says the clergyman; "you have behaved as a villain to an innocent child, and all you can do by way of reparation must be done. Promises alone will not do, so come to me early in the morning, and let us arrange the business in the best way we can. You know of course where Rhoda is?"

"No, indeed, sir. We'd fixed to meet a day or two hence at Temeford, and settle as to the wedding, and she was to let me know by some means where it was she'd got a home—more I don't know."

"In that case be with me as early as you can in the morning. You must repair to Temeford, and I will follow. Justice must be done; for if I do not see that it is, others will. The Trustees of Lady Herbert's Charity will, you may be quite sure, take stringent steps in the girl's behalf, if you do not act towards her as an honest man, and that speedily."

For many minutes after Mr. Quatford has passed on, young Clayton stands, as though irresolute as to his next proceedings ; but at length he makes his way slowly to the stable. There, without calling a servant, he attends to his horse, and when an hour or more has passed, he repairs to the house, thinking perhaps by this time that the inmates will be in bed. His sisters and the servants are gone, but his mother still sits grimly by the fire, the candle for economy's sake put out, and her eternal knitting in her hand.

"Well, Sam, thou'rt late," is all she says when he enters.

In reply he makes some sort of apology ; and then asking for the key of a certain closet, he fetches thence a bottle of spirits, and this, with a jug of water and glasses, he brings to a small table in front of the great settle. Here he stretches himself out, and proffers his mother the glass he mixes, but a negative is conveyed thus laconically,

"Nay, nay, Sam, one of us must keep a cool head, if duty's to be done."

From this moment she relapses into grim silence, which her son, as he drinks on, does not break. The clock ticks monotonously, the ashes drop into the hearth ; except for these, there is perfect and ominous silence.

But his mother, immovable as she has seemed, has been covertly watching him ; and now that she is sure his drunkenness has reached a certain maudlin point, she knows that the time for action

has arrived. She therefore lays by her knitting methodically, and, coming to the front of the table, lays her hand upon the shoulder of the witless man.

"Sam," she says, with iron sternness, "thou knowest that the wench Rhoda has left the hall—what hast thou to do with it?"

He is terrified by her manner perhaps, for he makes no answer.

"Come, let's have a yea or nay! What's thy share in the matter?"

"Why," he answers, honest for the instant, though he is overawed, "a bit ago I behaved like a villain to a good and innocent child, and I must do her justice."

"And to do this justice," she says, mockingly, repeating his words, "thou wantest money for Tuesday next? The pretence, to pay the Teme-ford malt bill—the fact, to bring me home a dear daughter!" She lays such mocking emphasis on the two last words, that he is perhaps newly awed—at least he is silent.

"This being the case," she proceeds, "I must act. I was in the garden listening for thee, when thou rodest up, and heard the parson's sermon. But if he's one opinion, I've another; and so, Sam, thou must act as I will. Go and put the mare in the gig, and we'll be off, ere another half hour's gone, to thy cousin Colclough, thirty miles away in the next county. There thou canst be till thou'st married; for marry I suppose thou must,



if only to clear thyself o' th' mess thou hast fallen into !”

“Marry !” he repeats, as though struck dumb by what she says, imbecile with drink though he be, “I can only marry Rhoda—my heart is with the girl—she is beautiful, and good, and tender. Mother, I love her, as I love nothing else in all the world, and I shall be one whom neither God nor man will pity if I desert her and her unborn babe.”

“This is a pleasant thing, Sam, to tell thy mother. But hark thee, no charity-bred pauper shall cross this threshold. Thou shalt marry Mary Jones, and that at once. When I heard o' th' mess this morn, an hour or so after thou'd left home, I guessed at once thy part in it ; for that old witch, Price, when she came pestering the t'other day after what thou owest her, gave me a broad hint about thy graciousness with the girl. So I went at once to Mary's uncle, and spoke o' thy taking her. He said he'd give thee fifty pounds down if thou'd take the wench off his hands, for she'd been a sore trouble to him, as indeed all his nieces and nephews had ; and that thou shalt have more at his death. I said fifty pounds was little enough, and that I understood the sum would be five hundred. But he replied that the money is out at interest just now, and couldn't be got in at an hour's warning. So, as thou'st fallen into such a scrape, I consented.”

“But it's bargaining without me, mother,” he gasps ; “I don't like Mary Jones, though she's

been dangling after me so long. There's the lease, too, o' th' farm to think of, and——"

"You fool!" she interrupts, contemptuously; "don't you know that love is fiddlesticks, and that half the marriages in the world are made for gain. As to the lease, hasn't it yet two years to run, and what need we care a rush for the anger of the Trustees, or that silly chaplain? Come! thou must act like a man, and be a man, or there'll be a strife betwixt us that in this life will have no end."

For a time he is immovable, but she is wily and plies him with drink, and when at last he has reached that maudlin state that her threats and bitter denunciations tell with effect, she gains his consent to accompany her. Still masculine and powerful, she goes forth herself to the stable and harnesses the mare to the gig, and leads the vehicle round to the outer gates. Then, returning, she dresses herself in outdoor apparel, packs a few necessaries in a bag, arouses her daughters, holds some minutes' whispered talk with them, and, going again down-stairs, leads forth her drunken son to the gig, helps him in, takes her place beside him, shakes the reins, cracks the whip, and is gone before the hall clock strikes twelve!

In the morning young Clayton is, of course, not to be found; his mother is, however, at home again before the day has closed. From her the chaplain can elicit nothing, though an hour afterwards Miss Jones, seated gaily between the

mother and sisters, listens with great satisfaction to the course of action proposed, as well as in return imparts all that has happened at the hall.

On the morrow, as well as the day after that, Mrs. Clayton is from home, and on the third morning Miss Jones, gaily attired, enters Mrs. Hutchinson's bedroom; for the poor gentlewoman, thoroughly overcome by her great troubles, has risen but once since they befell. In spite of this, the teacher has come to say that she is going out on urgent business for some hours. Mrs. Hutchinson expresses her surprise, and demurs to her going.

"Oh, I *must* go!—it is on urgent family business. The children will do very well: I have given the general superintendence to Tibb, and made the elder girls monitors."

"In this case, Miss Jones, you must leave Shirlet as soon as I am able to again undertake my ordinary duties. I really cannot——"

"Pray, do not trouble yourself to say more. Everything will be arranged, I am quite sure, most satisfactorily. I, on my part, have no intention to remain. The morning after next you shall have a note from me. Good day—my friends will be waiting for me."

Speaking thus, and making a sort of mock curtsy, the teacher, ungrateful, insolent, and base as she is, leaves the room.

Nothing further is heard of her till the time she has herself set. Then a note arrives to inform

the matron that "Miss Jones is the happy wife of Samuel Clayton, Esquire—begs that her clothes may be sent to the farm, as it is not her intention to again teach charity children, or face unfounded charges made against her in relation to the girl Rhoda."

Poor Rhoda! your enemy has triumphed against you, and you must face the world alone, with your terrible misery! But the Fates are not always unjust, even to women.

As all the inquiries made by the police, and even by good Mr. Quatford, fail to elicit anything respecting Rhoda, Mrs. Hutchinson, as soon as she is able, repairs herself to Temeford. Here, after two days' indefatigable search, she gains some information of the girl in an adjacent hamlet. But she reaches the cottage to which she has been directed only to be disappointed.

"The poor young thing, ma'am," says the mistress of the place, "lodged here; but she left five days ago. She never told me her name, or where she came from, but I guessed at her trouble, so of that she told me. She expected the young man, she said, to come and marry her, and she wrote him many letters to the place he had directed, but never an answer came. In spite of this she kept looking out for him, and each day she went a good way on the road he should come, in the hope of meeting him. At last, on the very day before she left mine, she learnt from the man who keeps the turnpike she passed through, that a person of her lover's name

had been married only a few days before to a teacher at Shirlot of the name of Jones. When the poor thing heard this she dropped down, the man says, for he was good enough to bring her home here in a cart, as senseless as a stone. I tried to comfort her; I offered to seek her friends, but she wouldn't let me. The next day she left, paying me very justly before she started, though I would fain not have taken the few shillings she possessed, as I knew she would be almost penniless. For she had told me that when she left her happy home she had but one shilling, and that she had raised the rest by selling her cloak and a spare pair of shoes to a woman in the road. So thus, ma'am, she went, weeping bitterly as she did so, and leaving me more sorrowful than I'd ever been in my life before."

"She did not say where she was going?"

"No, ma'am. But she had told me something of an old and well-to-do woman—a sort of relative, I think—with whom she'd been used to spend a few weeks sometimes; so perhaps she's gone there."

With this poor clue, Mrs. Hutchinson seeks Rhoda's sole relation, a hard, miserly old woman, keeping a farm amidst the hills.

"No, I know naught of the girl, and don't want. All sorts of folks have been here plaguing me about her. Ay, and she came herself a few nights ago, but I'd learnt enough from t'others to let me know what was the matter, so I clapped the door in her face, just telling afore I did it that I'd have no hussies here. With this she

went forth into the rain again, and I know naught more."

The matron herself turns away from the ruthless woman's door with a broken heart. Were it not that she is herself the mother of a worthless son, the girl might still be as innocent as she is beautiful and good!

END OF VOL. II.

